STUDIES IN THE BHAGABATA

EDITOR
Dr. K. C. MISHRA

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B. N. Pande
GOVERNOR, ORISSA

RAJ BHAVAN
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MESSAGE

I am glad to know that the Institute of Orissan Culture is organising an All India Seminar on *Sreemad Bhagabat* on 26th and 27th June 1987 at Bhubaneswar.

Sreemad Bhagabat is not merely a scripture or Testament in the ordinary sense of the term, it represents the very journey of the human soul through different stages of evolution and growth. It provides through its narrations an open sesame for the physical, mental and spiritual development of human beings till they have reached the ultimate stage of Kaivalya (Salvation). In the present materialistic society, such a development is considered to be very essential. This alone can usher in a new order and succeed in restoration of values essential for the survival of mankind groping amidst lots of doubts and uncertainties which haunt us. I hope, the deliberations at the conference will make the people more conscious and bring a great change in the mind of the human society.

I wish the conference all success.

B. N. PANDE
Governor, Orissa

JANAKI BALLAV PATNAIK
Chief Minister

Bhubaneswar
17-6-1987

MESSAGE

I am thankful to the members of the Institute of Orissan Culture for inviting me to inaugurate a seminar on *Sreemad Bhagabat* at Bhubaneswar on June 26 and 27, 1987. Much as I do wish to be in their midst on the occasion I have to regret my inability to do so owing to engagements fixed earlier. However, I commend the efforts of the Institute in the direction and I wish the seminar all success.

J. B. PATNAIK

JADUNATH DASH MOHAPATRA
Minister
Education, Sports & Youth Services
Orissa

Bhubaneswar
22-6-87

M E S S A G E

I am glad to know that Institute of Orissan Culture, Bhubaneswar is holding the All India Seminar on *Bhagabat* this month. *Bhagabat* has been accepted as the highest book of knowledge not only in India but also abroad. Its Philosophy of life has provided light to the mankind for centuries.

I wish the Seminar all success.

J. N. Dash Mohapatra

Presidential Address

Our reverend Guests, Dear Scholars of eminence, esteemed participants and friends :

At the outset I extend a hearty welcome to you all. I feel extremely privileged to get eminent scholars of India in our midst in our two day Seminar on *the Bhagabat*. Last year we had the privilege of sponsoring a two day Seminar on *The Ramayana* on behalf of our Institute of Orissan Culture. This time, also this Seminar is being jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India and the Department of Culture, Government of Orissa.

The Bhagabat is a unique contribution of India towards man's search for sublimation. In one way it has brought about national integration and on the other, it has kept the flame of 'Sanatan Dharma' ever glowing. Sri Jagannath Das of Orissa, a medieval saint of 16th Century is honoured in every house hold in Orissa for his maiden translation of *The Bhagabat* from Sanskrit to Oriya The Bhagabat Tungi, a sacred cottage in every village in Orissa is more than a temple or shrine where people gather in the evening to listen the Oriya Bhagabat of Sri Jagannath Das read out to them by a village scholar. This tradition is fast receding. We are trying to revive it with new vigour as its major contribution to the pastoral or agrarian civilisation is beyond doubt. It moulded the religious life of Orissa and was responsible for removing illiteracy from Orissa. Its relevance is further intensified at the present context where we find how virtue is being maimed and crippled under machine and machination and complex crudities of human behaviour. It would be a unique opportunity for us to hear from the erudite scholars and participants. The discussions that would follow will definitely explore new vistas of inter reactions and newer possibilities in the direction of finding out some spiritual remedy to our manifold sufferings today.

Dr. K. C. Mishra

Bhubaneswar — Director, Institute of Orissan Culture

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INTRODUCTION

The Bhagavata is a unique text epitomizing the Hindu way of life which transcends all sectarian confines. The text itself reflects a great erudition intellectual subtlety, spiritual excellence and unvarnished devotion to the ultimate Reality in an enviable style. As a piece of didactic literature it stands high, and as a philosophical treatise it is considered the greatest of all Puranas, Upanishads and Samhitas. I need not emphasize on this aspect of *the Bhagavata* for learned readers of this book shall feel certainly enlightened by valuable dicussions of our esteemed scholar-contributors which we have so gratefully anthologized here.

In our grand pan-Indian tradition *the Bhagavata* plays a pivotal role besides our great Epics. If Epics have kept our social fabric harmoniously flowing *the Bhagavata* has successfully met many a spiritual quest of divergent intellectual, yogis and seekers of truth. This is indeed magnumopus of our spiritual wealth and wisdom.

The state of Orissa strategically is the only connecting link between the south and north of India which has

ungrudgingly heard the cross currents of spiritual quest. Its antiquity if properly studied would unravel multiple facts of its spiritual tide and ebb but none the less, Vaisnavite culture, the dominating feature of Orissan religious tradition aims at an assimilation into all other faith. Some of the ancient temples of Orissa were dedicated to the worship of Narayana, Madhava, Purusottama, Viranchi Narayana—all different forms of lord Krishna-Vasudeva.

The regional version of *The Bhagavata* by Jagannath Das, the saint poet was probably the foremost attempt in India to popularise the cult of *Bhagavata* among the illiterate masses. It reflects the tremendous courage and gusto of an Oriya writer. Later on *The Bhagavata* became not only a hallowed text to be venerated in private chapels in Orissa but it became almost a way of life among the Oriyas.

It became so popular that in other outlying areas of Orissa the same was rendered into other vernaculars.

An illiterate tiller of the soil in the interior part of the state is found quoting the stanzas of *the Bhagavata* not as a parade of his erudition but as a necessary instrument of execution of his social duties. He handles it as a jurisprudence to resolve inequities of justice among his fellow brethren.

Incouse of time *the Bhagavata* could become in Orissa, a curative talisman and the last sip of spiritual liquor to a dying man at the time of his final exit from the world. Such is the immense popularity of the Oriya Bhagavata. The noted devout poet Jayadev composed his

former Gitagovinda on Krshna lila in the 13th century. As an inspired minstrel of Lord Krishna he laid the mosaic of divine love in delicious diction modelled after the Rasapanchadhyayi of *the Bhagavata*. Kavi Dindima Jibadevacharya, the courtpoet of Prataprudra Dev composed two unigue texts in Sanskrit so far unpublished i. e., the Bhakti Bhagavatam Kavya and Bhakti Vaibhava Natakam which established *the Bhagavata* Dharma high above the sectarian beliefs. Hundreds of unpublished Krishna Kavyas have been written here and a quite good number of literary works in Oriya are filled with the episodes of Gopinath-Krshna and the importance of devotion.

Sridhara Swami the medieval scholar of Orissa wrote an exhaustive commentary on *the Bhagavata* which is acknowledged as a pioneering work on Vaisnavism. Almost four hundred years after Pandit Baladeva Vidyabhusan of Orissa wrote his famous commentary the Gobinda Bhasyam. Moreover the Bhagavatism had its impact on the people of Orissa right from the 6th century A. D. When one of the kings of Orissa belonging to the Sailodbhava dynasty the King Madhava Raj declared himself as the devotee of Madhava. Later on in the 9th century the King Satrubhanja of Khinjiligarh Mandal of Orissa installed the Deity Nilamadhava at Gangaradi of Orissa.

The Institute of Orissan Culture is proud to have launched its third venture in publishing this anthology on *the Bhagavata* for its innumerable readers. We have been received well by our readers from our earlier publications— Odradesarajavasmavali Odisara Kavi Jayadev, Ramayan in Eastern India. Prachya Bharatare Ramayana. The learned

papers presented by eminent scholars all over India were discussed in the National Seminar hosted by our Institute and are included in a book form released.

As the Director of the Institute of Orissan Culture, I express my deep gratitude to our learned contributors without whose help and participation the book '*Studies in The Bhagavata*' would have not seen the light of the day.

K. C. Mishra
Director

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS AT THE ALL INDIA SEMINAR ON *SRIMAD BHAGABAT*

(delivered by Sri Sarat Rout, Hon'ble Minister of State, for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Govt. of Orissa.)

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to Dr. K. C. Mishra, Director of Institute of Orissan Culture, Bhubaneswar for giving me an opportunity to be amongst you, the learned scholars and audience. This evening, in this valedictory function, Dr. Mishra also deserves thanks for having organised this All India Seminar on SRIMAD BHAGABAT, which is considered as one of the great classics of Indian literature, culture and religion. In the present times, when we are facing a crisis of faith and conscience and various types of divisive forces are dividing us asunder and there has been resulting erosion of the great traditional values which India stood for, it is quite befitting that such a seminar on SRIMAD BHAGABAT has been organised and an attempt made to ponder over the messages of the Bhagabat, recollect the old values and relive in them. I am confident that the deliberations which you have been making here since yesterday will be very helpful to all in resurrecting the high values which Bhagabat Dharma stood for. And that is very much necesseary for our country now when it is very often coming within the indecent grip of communal convulsions and religious and cultural intolerances.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you all know, Bhagabat

Purana is one of the eighteen Puranas and the names of these eighteen Puranas are :

1. Bayu Purana
2. Bramhanda Purana
3. Markandeya Purana
4. Bishnu Purana
5. Matsya Purana
6. Bhagabat Purana
7. Kurma Purana
8. Baman Purana
9. Linga Purana
10. Baraha Purana
11. Padma Purana
12. Naradiya Purana
13. Agni Purana
14. Garuda Purana
15. Brahma Purana
16. Skanda Purana
17. Brahmabaibarta Purana
18. Bhabishya Purana

Besides these Puranas, there are also some Up-puranas. By my mention of the Bhagabat Purana in the sixth place, it should not be construed that this purana is the sixth in the merit list of Puranas. As a matter of fact, this is considered as the greatest Purana. There is a saying in Sanskrit which means that if one's learning is to be tested, it is to be so done with reference to the Bhagabat. Such is the importance of the Bhagabat. The Bhagabat is considered to be a purana; because the characteristics of a purana, namely, the three aspects of creation (Srusti, Sthiti, and Pralaya), geneological table of the kings of different dynasties etc. are available here. Puranas are considered to be one of the great sources of ancient Indian history. As you all know, Mr. Pargiter, a British I. C. S. officer was the first scholar to make historical interpretation of different incidents mentioned in the Puranas and basing on his interpretations only, scholars have been able to identify the reigning years of Mahapadma Nanda. So, considered from historical point of view also the study of puranas is very relevant.

Scholars believe that these puranas including the Bhagabat purana were written during the Gupta period when

there was decline of Buddhism and revival of Brahminism. They also claim that the Bhagabat purana was written during the 5th-6th century A. D. There is a great question mark here. Is the present Bhagabat purana as available to us, the same that had been written by Vyasadev ? To seek an answer, to this, you may refer to chapter-53 of Matsya purana where the contents, in brief, of the Bhagabat purana are given. These contents do not completely agree with the contents of the present Bhagabat. So it is highly probable that there was an earlier Bhagabat which was the protype of the present one from which chapters have been written in the latter. Most probably this earlier work has been mentioned in the Bishnu, Kurma and other puranas as well. It is high time that research should be made in this direction to find out how far interpolations have been made in the Bhagabat and other puranas. It is possible to do so by making a comparative socio-anthropological study of the works of different periods and by other means.

Though the Bhagabat Purana is assignable to 5th-6th century A. D., it should not be misunderstood that the Krushna Basudev Dharma which is glorified in this Purana is 5th-6th century old. We have a number of references to Krishna in the Vedas and the Upanishads, most prominent among them, being the Chhandogya Upanishad. In the Naganika inscriptions of Heredotus (5th century B.C.) there are also references to Basudev cult. So this Basudev cult can be traced back to many centuries before the birth of Christ.

The Bhagabat Purana, as you all know, is the religion of devotional love in God. It is a religion of love seeking communion of the devotee with God the Supreme Person. It is also called Narayaniya, Saswata, Ekantika or Pancharatra

religion. Its main sources are the Narayaniya Section of the Mahabharat, Bhagabat Gita, Bhagabat Purna, Narada Sutra and Sandilya Sutra.

There are two ways of attaining God. One is the Gyana-Marga and the other one is the Bhakti Marga. But God is so great that he cannot be apprehended by the senses. He is beyond the ken of logic and argument. He can be realised only through whole-hearted devotion. God is very near to the devotee. This concept is largely identical with the concept of God in the Rig Veda and the Sama Veda where it is said that God is as near to a devotee as father to his son. How can this stage be attained ? According to the Gita a devotee is to make complete surrender of himself before God. This stage is technically known as 'Prapatti or 'Sharanagati', meaning complete resignation to God. The Bhagabat also says the same thing in the 4th Skanda where it is said that taking refuge in God is the highst good of man. The Bhagabat enumerates nine types of Bhakti known as Nabadha Bhakti. A devotee is free to adopt any one of these nine types of devotion to attain God.

One may ask the question as to what is the necessity of Bhakti for man ? Is it meant to fulfil some wordly desires ? According to Bhagabat, Bhakti is free from all desires. It says that the desires of man should be suppressed and brought under control. It does not say that all desires should be made extinct; because it is very difficult to attain such a stage. Only a few men can achieve it. Therefore just like Buddha, Bhagabat has preached a practical religion. According to its injunctions we should do our duty by suppressing our desires without any attachment to the results which should be left to God only. In the 10th Skanda of Bhagabat this is very amply illustrated where it is said that

the devotee, in this concentration, offers himself to God limb by limb and in the result his whole being is fully dedicated to God. In such a state there is complete communion with God and this is known as Jibanmukti.

A pertinent question may be asked as to whether there is any relationship between Bhakti and Karma or action. Does Bhagabat teach us to indulge in Bhakti only by renouncing all actions and thereby making us a lethargic people ? You all know what Lord Krishna said to Arjuna in the Bhagabat Gita while encouraging him to fight. In his famous lines, embodied in the second chapter of the Gita, he advised Arjuna to cast aside his weakness of heart, shake off lethargy and impotency and to do his duty as a hero. Even though he had advised elswhere to Arjuna to completely surrender himself to God, still he insisted that, he should not be lethargic and impotent. On the other hand, he should be quite active and performing his duties faithfully without any attachment. The Bhagabat also gives the same message. In the 11th Skanda it is said that we should surrender all action to God and there should not be any desire for fruits. In the 7th Skanda it is said that the complete surrender of soul to God is the highest truth. The highest truth and the only truth is God and nothing else. This is what Mahatma Gandhi has also said. According to the Bhagabat, complete surrender to God means attaining the highst truth or communion with God. In other words, this is Jivanmukti, which means salvation during one's life time. There are very many examples in the Bhagabat where the primacy of Bhakti over Karma has been propounded and established.

Does Bhagabat Dharma teach us to completely renounce the world and be away from society ? Does it say that

we have no social commitments to fulfil ? The plain and simple answer will be no. It does not want us to cast aside social and religious observances. According to it, the injunctions of the scriptures should be observed till faith in God is deepened. Social laws should be observed till we acquire devotion to God. We should not revolt against society. There is a very bold line which says that we should have courage to lay aside the scriptures if they stand in the way of our culture of devotion and if they deter us from developing an undivided and uninterrupted flow of love towards God. Bhagabat has evolved a culture of devotion and has prescribed the various ways of acquiring this devotion to God. It also points out the results of observance of such devotion. According to it by attaining the stage of devotion, a person becomes fulfilled, and fully contented. He also becomes free from the worldly births and deaths by country of desires Here there is a little difference from what the Buddha had said with reference to desires. He had said that complete destruction of desires would be necessary for attaining Nirvana or salvation. Is it a practicable proposition ? If you go through the long history of Buddhism in this country and else-where, you will find that there had been repeated schisms amongst the Buddhists on this issue, which finally brought disastrous results for Buddhism. But Bhagabat has preached a practical proposition, namely, control of desires and through this it is possible to attain salvation.

When a devotee is engaged in pure devotion to God how does he reach salvation ? Whether he goes to God or God comes down to him ? The sayings in the Bhagabat are very important on this and closely resemble those of the Sama Veda. In the Sama Veda there is a line which says that as a cow runs to her calf, so God runs to his devotee.

In the 9th Skanda of Bhagabat, Lord Krishna says that he is entirely dependent of his devotees. His heart is completely given over to his saintly devotees. He is there beloved. He has no liking either for himself or for his wife Laxmi without the association of his saintly devotees, whose sole refuge he is.

The Bhagabat has also highlighted the freedom from bondage in this world and prescribed the methods for such liberation. In the first Skanda of the Bhagabat it is said that supreme devotion to Lord liberates man form bondage or Sansar.

As I have said earlier, there are two ways of attaining God, namely, Bhakti Marga and Karma Marga. The primacy of Bhakti Marga is accepted in the Bhagabat. Narada in his Bhakti Sutra has also expressed the same view. According to him devotion is higher than action, higher than knowledge and higher than concentration of mind or Yoga. It is not a means to an end; it is the highest end itself. This highest end is communion with God by complete surrender. There is no scope for egoism here unlike in the Gyan Marga or Karma Marga. So a devotee is more loved by God than any other man.

Bhagabat Dharma is not confined to Hindus only. It applies to the entire mankind and in its application the barriers of caste, nationality and religion are broken. There is a line in the 9th Skanda of Bhagabat which says that even the Chandal is purged of the impurity of his caste by firm devotion to God. In the 3rd Skanda it has been said even a Chandal, possessed of sincere faith in God is dearer to Him, than a Brahman sadly lacking faith. A man of low birth can be liberated from bondage if he utters the name of God only

once. Like this there are many instances in the Bhagabat and other Bhakti literatures wherein universality of application of Bhagabat Dharma has been prescribed. Christianity is for Christians, Islam is for Muslims and so on; but Bhagabat is for all irrespective of any religion one belongs to.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have taken much of your time in speaking out my mind on the Bhagabat from a layman's point of view. Many of you are experts on this and have studied Bhagabat in greater depth. I have posed here some questions to you and I would request you to please ponder over the same and find out suitable answers so that the true import of Bhagabat Dharma is made available to common man. What common man needs now is not the scholastic expression of the Bhagabat Dharma; but its practical application in the field. I would there-fore suggest that you should try to bring the message of the Bhagabat to the common man in the most effective form in a language and form easily understandable by him. That will be a great success of this seminar.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would thank you again to have borne with me for a few minutes and I would also thank the Director of the Institute of Orissan Culture Dr. Mishra for giving me an opportunity to be amongst you this evening.

Thank you all.

SRIDHARA SVAMI : HIS PHILOSOPHICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. Bijayananda Kar

As one of the prominent glossers of *Srimad Bhagavata* and *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, Sridhara Svami has been very popular in the religio-philosophical tradition of India. These two glosses of Sridhara (i. e., one on *Bhagavata* called *Bhavartha Dipika* and the other on *Gita* called *Subodhini*) have been collected from various parts of the country and are published in different languages. Besides these two important works, he has also composed a gloss on *Visnu-purana* which is named as *Atma-prakasa*.

I

It is a fact that for a long time the indologists have not been able to locate Sridhara's date as well as place of birth. However, scholars have supposed that since Sridhara mentioned the name of Vopadeva in his writing he should not be considered as earlier to him. Thus his period has been determined as not earlier than 1300 A.D.(1) It is also stated that Sridhara was Mahant of Sankarite monastery, Govardhan at Puri around 1400 A.D.(2) In this connection it is, said that in the succession list of Sankaracaryas of Govardhan math (Puri),Padmapada was the first and Sridhara was the tenth.(3) Moreover, while introducing Sridhara's *Bhavartha-Dipika*, Pt. R. S. Pandeya of Varanasi has referred to one popular saying according to which Sridhara's gloss on *Bhagavata* was found on the lap of the Lord at the Jagannath temple of Puri

(*Sridhara Svami Krteyam tika bhagavatah krode lobdhasana asit*).(4) It is also held in the tradition that Caitanya, the great leader of Vaisnavism, acknowledged Sridhara as 'Jagad-guru'.(5)

From all these accounts given here one thing seems to be fairly certain that Sridhara's time can never be placed as prior to that of Vopadeva and posterior to that of Caitanya. Further it is also the case that he remained at Puri of Orissa for a long time and was an Advaitin by Philosophical conviction. In the recent past it has been claimed that Sridhara was born in the village Marai gaon of Balasore, Orissa.(6) This claim has also been accepted by historians.(7) There has also been the assertion that Sridhara wrote glosses on *Gita* etc. at Saptasajya of Dhenkanal, Orissa.(8) And again it is claimed later that Sridhara wrote *Bhavartha-Dipika* at the Brahmacarimath of Kapilas of the same Dhenkanal.(9)

In 1980, a book under the title: *Sambhuksetra Kapilas O Sridhara Svami* came out in which the writers of the book have given elaborate account regarding the birth place and the main centre of philosophic activity of Sridhara.(10) It has been mentioned in the book that Pratap Bhanu Deb, one of the Gajapati kings of Orissa brought Ramakrsna Svami (a prominent saint of Govardhan math) to Kapilas in order to establish and supervise the religio-philosophical activities of Brahmacarimath. This math had been set up in the Sankarite tradition and for that it was also named as Dandi Svami math. It is stated in the book that Sridhara who was a disciple of Ramakrsna came also to Kapilasa and there meditated upon Nrsimha, the presiding deity of the math. During his stay at Kapilasa, Sridhara, it is stated, prepared gloss on the *Srimad Bhagavata*. All these, according to the writers of the book, are found in the

chronicle or records of the Govardhanmath of Puri. In this context, the following lines found in the said record are quite revealing.

"Sriramakrsnanando bhut sisyastasya mahayatih, svara vijnana naipunyat punyani tena mahadyasah, tadbetya dadau tasmai svami-varyaya netrtani. Pratapabhanu nrpatih Kapilasa sivalaye, tatsisyo'bhut Sridhara Svami padah."

It is interesting to note here that while writing gloss on *Bhagavata*, Sridhara paid his homage to Nrsimha. It was as follows :

"Vagisa yasya vadane laksmiryasya ca vaksyasi yasyaste hrdaye Samvit tam Nrsimhamahan bande"

This shows that Sridhara, being an Advaitin, found no inconsistency in having devotion to a particular deity called Nrsimha. Because it was nothing but symbolic (*pratikopasana*) and in that way it was never thought to be an obstacle for Advaita realisation. As a matter of fact it is said that Padmapada was also a worshipper of Nrsimha.(11)

Now, with regard to the point that Ramakrsna was the *guru* of Sridhara there seems to be a point of dispute. For in the Bengali Encyclopaedia the name 'Paramananda' has been mentioned as the name of the *guru* of Sridhara. This appears to have got support from Sridhara's own writing. In the last *sloka* of *Bhavartha-Dipika* he writes :

"giyatam Paramananda nrhari sadguru svayam Sri Paramananda Samprityei guhayam bhagavatam maya, vivrtam tanmatenedam natu manmati baibhavam"

But, in order to determine the implications of this statement, it has been stated(12) that to Sridhara, the *Sadguru*

is Paramananda *svarupa*. Furthermore, whoever is Nrsimha he is also Paramananda *svarupa*. So there is no incoherency on the part of Sridhara to treat Paramananda as his *istadeva* or tutelary deity. This statement, therefore, does not necessarily suggest that Paramananda was his actual *guru* and he was his actual *sisya*. Rather if one depends upon the chronicle of Govardhanmath then it is quite acceptable that Sridhara's *guru* was actually Ramakrsna. Giving due consideration to these accounts found in the records of the math, it may be reasonable to suppose that Sridhara composed all his religio-philosophical writings in Orissa. And depending on some of the historians' view (as stated above) one may say that Sridhara had his birth in Balasore and must have lived during 1300-1400 A.D.

II

Now let us discuss briefly Sridhara's philosophical contribution. It has been indicated before that Sridhara was an Advaitin. In the religious tradition his position was definitely respectable in view of the fact that he was the tenth, Samkaracarya of Govardhanmath. Samkarites, it is said, were divided into two main groups, namely, the *Smartas* and the *Bhagabatas*. The former were said to be the *suddha jnanavadins* in the sense they did not accept *bhakti* or devotion in any form for enlightenment. But the latter tempered the idea of *mukti* with *bhakti*. According to them *bhakti* is not necessarily incompatible for the attainment of the highest. It is obvious that Sridhara belonged to this latter group. He was definitely one of those few Advaitins who became conspicuous in synthesising *jnana* and *bhakti*. Brahman can be the object of devotion and in that sense to worship Nrsimha was considered as no hindrance for the attainment of *moksa*.

But here Sridhara's point may be objected on the ground that Advaitism is essentially knowledge-oriented (*jnana-paraka*). Realisation of Brahman (*moksa*) is possible exclusively by knowledge. Of course, this is not ordinary knowledge but pure knowledge of non-duality (*para vidya*). But, whatever it may be, this pure knowledge cannot have any term with *bhakti*. Because *bhakti*, in any form, must imply some form of duality and multiplicity. That is why Advaita *nirgunavada* must have its logical climax in *maya* according to which the world of diversity, though appears to be real, finally is not real and therefore has to be discarded as *vivarta*. For this the uncompromising Advaitism has been severely criticised by the theistic Vedantins and Vijnana Bhiksu, for instance, treated *mayavada* as *asat sastra*. In view of this it may be found as logically untenable to find a synthesis of *jnana* and *bhakti* within the Advaitic framework.

But, in spite of such objection, attempts have been made to include *bhakti* within the fold of Advaita. It is said that Samkara himself, being the propounder of *nirguna tattva*, was also a devotee of Srikrsna (13) Samkara's name is found as one of the old commentators of Bhagavata in a work entitled : *Bhagavata-tatparyanirnaya* of Madhva.(14) In view of the fact that everybody is not capable of compehending the *nirguna-tattva*, he should seek Brahman through the *bhaktimarg*. It is *bhakti* which purges the mind from worldly impurities and finally Brahman is attained. It is clear that, from the standpoint of *Vyavahara*, Samkara, acknowledged the excellence of *bhakti-marg*. In his *Viveka cudamoni* (*Sloka*)-*32*), he had even gone so far as to assert *bhakti* as the best among all the means for the attainment of *mukti*. In *Brahma-Sutra-bhasya* (III. 2. 13) he clearly held that in spite of Brahman being *nirvisesa* from the standpoint

of *paramartha,* it should be viewed as *savisesa* (*savisesa-tvamapi brahman-o'-bhyupagantavyam*). It is also stated that Brahman, even if is all parvasive (*bibhu*), can be realised in a particular point like Visnu can be realised through salagrama (*Sarva-ga-syapi brahmana upalabhyartham sthana viseso na virudhyate salagrama iva visnoh—Brahma-Sutra-bhasya,* I. 2. 14)

It appears that Sridhara, in this perspective, was one of the most dependable interpreters of Samkara's Advaita. Even if he accepted Brahman to be *nirguna, nirakara* and *nirvisesa* from the *paramarthika drsti*, he definitely accepted Brahman as *saguna Isvara,* from the *vyavaharika drsti.* That is the reason why he found no inconsistency in conceiving *Isvara* as Nrsimha, Parmananda *svarupa* and Purusottama. The *Bhagavata-purana* (I. 2. 11) treats *Isvara* as both *nimitta* and *upadana karana* and regards Him as Brahman, Paramatman and Bhagavat. Commenting on this, Sridhara in his *Bhavartha-Dipika* (X. 87.26) held that the world is unreal, but has the ultimate reality of Brahman as its basis and therefore looks like real.

"Yat sattvatah sada bhati jagad etad asat svatah Sad-abhasam asatyasmin bhagavantam bhajami tam."

According to him the world is really false being connected with nescience. But it appears as real being created out of real Brahman ("*Udbhutam bhavatah sato'pi bhubanam san-naiva*", *Bhavartha-Dipika*, X. 87. 36).

Sridhara, with regard to the relation between *Isvara* and *Jagat,* utilised the analogy of yarn and cloth. He held that as without the basis of cause yarn, the effect cloth is not seen so also the world has no basis apart from God.

But it should be noted that the world-effect, though appears to be real, has no reality from the stand-point of Brahman. Sridhara seems to have well understood this implication of Advaita point of view and therefore held that change only appears as real and the world along with the individual *Jivas* appear as reals; but in the ultimate analysis (*paramartha vicara*) the names and forms do not persist and there is nothing apart from Brahman.

Brahma-Sutra (II. 3. 43-49) mentions the part and whole relationship between Brahman and Jiva. Samkara interpreted it as "*amsa iva amsah*" (part as it were) and meaning thereby that "part and whole" formulation is not really acceptable within the Advaitic framework. It is intersting to note here that both Ramanuja and Nimbarka held that *Jiva* is a real *amsa* of Brahman, even as the light coming out of fire is an *amsa* of fire. Vallabha maintained that *Jiva* is *amsa* of *Isvara* because there is both difference and identity between them. All these renderings advanced by Ramanuja, Nimbarka and Vallabha can obviously be seen as not compatible with the Advaita point of view. Even *Bhagavata* (XII, 171) accepts the point that appearance of rope as snake is due to *adhyasa*, and this view clearly seems to be close to Samkaras stand. It is worthy to note that Sridhara, because of his Advaita learnings, gave more emphasis on *avidya* and *maya* and said that like shell and silver, the *Jivas* which have been treated as parts of Brahman are not real transformations (*Vikara*) of Brahman but are apparent (*Vivarta*).

"mithya-drsyatvat-sukti-rajatadi-vad-ityadi" Bhavartha-Dipika, (XI. 19. 17).

All these clearly establish the point that Sridhara is primarily an Advaitin. And he never wanted to forgo the

Advaita doctrine of *adhyasa* at the face of his learnings towards devotionalism. He is in the line of Samkara in admitting *vyavaharika satta* (empirical reality) and at the same time accepting *Nirguna-Brahmavada*. For this reason, while writing gloss over *Gita* (*Subodhini*), he started acknowledging the views of *bhasyakara*, Samkara as follows :

"bhasya-kara-matam samyak tad-vyakhyatrgiras-tatha,
yatha-mati samalocya gita-vyakhyam samarabhe."

Hence Sridhara is an Advaita Jnanavadi from philosophic point of view; but while conceding the greatness of knowledge he had not, of course, set aside the relevancy of devotion and in that way he had become prominent in bringing an integration between *jnana* and *bhakti* within the Advaita fold.

III

It can be seen that Sridhara's view-point is not simply given due recognition within the Advaita sect; but he had been acknowledged with great reverence by almost all the prominent Vaisnavite thinkers of at least eastern India including Caitanya himself. The post-Caitanya Vaisnavites of Bengal like Jiva, Rupa and Sanatana, prominent Vaisnava thinker of Assam like Sankaradeva and also prominent Vaisnavite from Orissa like Jagannath Das have accepted Sridhara's importance in religio-philosophical discussion. In this context Caitanya's affinity with Sridhara needs special mention. Though traditional account concerning Caitanya's devotionalism is not all found to be same, the most dominant and usually accepted rendering seems to be that which puts caitanya in the Advaita camp rather than that of Ramanuja

or Madhva. It is said that Caitanya, on several occasions, had addressed himself as *mayavadin*. (15) Kavikarnapura stated Caitanya entered the monastic order of Advaitin. (16) But the same writer in his another work stated that Caitanya reached Sarvabhauma's place at Puri and his stand was to establish *Bhakti Vedanta* by way of refuting *Advaita*. (17) However Caitanya had great admiration for Sridhara who was a prominent Advaita-bhakti-vadin. The tradition records that on one occasion Caitanya repudiated a commentary on *Bhagabata* by one Ballava Bhatta on the ground that it departed from Sridhara's track. (18)

It seems to us that Caitanya's affinity to Advaita was quite profound. He, because of that, accepted Sridhara's rendering of Advaita which considered *bhakti* as the best means for *Advaita-mukti*, and thus tempered the severe monistic idealism of Advaita with emotionalism of *bhakti*. In that way he presumably was a Bhagavata Advaitin and not a *Smarta* Advaitin. And that may well explain as to why he refuted Advaita while discussing with Sarvabhauma (whose point of view most probably was of *Smarta* type). All this shows the depth of closeness between the standpoints between Sridhara and Caitanya. In this context the following remark of a modern scholar is quite important.

"The roots, therefore, of the Bhakti movement, which Madhavendra Puri is said to have started in Bengal and which Caitanya carried forward and definitely shaped, must be sought in such traditions as originated from Sridhara's great commentary on the *Srimad Bhagabata*, which was accepted with much veneration by the Bengal school. The devotional interpretations of Sridhara were apparently accepted by a class of devotional sanyasins, who first laid

the foundations of a Vaisnava Bhakti movement in Bengal as the ultimate basis of the *Srimad Bhagabata.* (19)

Sridhara's philosophic contribution not only attracted Caitanya and his subsequent followers in Bengal, it also found a great supporter in Assam, in Samkaradeva. It is said that Samkaradeva's religious point of view which is based on the *Bhagavata-purana* greatly, almost invariably leans back upon the *Bhavartha-Dipika*, of Sridhara. (20)

In Orissa his *tika* on *Bhagavata* has been found as most acceptable and dependable. One of the foremost thinkers of Orissan Vaisnavism, Jagannatha Das expressed his reverence to Sridhara without any reservations. He wrote :

Sridhara name Vipravara
Kali yugare janma tara,
Sri Bhagavata ye purana
astadasa sasra slokena,
Ta tika caubimsa sasra
Karai Sridhara prakasa,
Vipra kulare janma hoi
Jagannatha ye nama bahi,
Prakrta bandhe Bhagavata
Kahile santha janahita

—*Oriya Bhagavata* (*dvadasa skandha*)

It goes without saying that Jagannatha's *Oriya Bhagavata* follows the spirit of Sridhara's thought. Further the Advaitic basis of *bhakti* that is originally anticipated in *Bhagavata* and later appropriately emphasised by Sridhara

was subsequently taken up with approval by many Vaisnavite thinkers of Orissa like Achyutananda, Balarama and Yasovanta. The works like *Anakara Samhita, Sunya Samhita* may be cited in this context. The typical Orissan *Jnana-misra-bhakti* (devotion integrated with knowledge), it seems to us, had its origin in the philosophic vision of Sridhara. Even the Orissan Mahima cult, which has nothing to do with the Vaisnava movement and has taken an independent form of development, emphasised the *nirguna* aspect of Advaitism considerably, though at the same time admitting *bhakti* within its fold.

The post-Caitanya Vaisnavite thinkers of Bengal made a departure from Advaitic basis and tried to develop devotionalism on an independent footing of love or *prema*. It is, however, the case that Sanatana, Jiva and Rupa paid their homage to Sridhara, but it should also be noted that they all accepted Sridhara's view "minus its *maya*-doctrine." (21) It was most probably because these thinkers were more attracted towards Madhva's Dvaitism. In fact Madhva affiliation is distinctly noticed in the writings of Baladeva (a prominent Vaisnavite of Orissa of a much later date) : *Govinda-bhasya* and *Prameya Ratnavali* and Baladeva, because of emphasising the elements of *prema* and *rasa* and promulgating the doctrine of *acintya-bhedabheda* carried the Vaisnava movement in another remarkable direction. Though, it should be noted, this direction is found to be a departure from Sridhara's stand, it has gained considerable influence among the Vaisnavites specially of Bengal. Whereas the *Jnana-misra-bhakti* movement of Orissan Vaisnavites, it seems to us, had its footing on Sridhara's *bhakti-advaita-tattva* and in that sense one can legitimately locate a distinguishing mark between Goudiya and Utkaliya

Vaisnavism. In fact this distinctive viewpoint of knowledge combined with devotion of Orissan Vaisnava thinkers was probably known to their counterparts in Bengal. In this connection the following saying of Vrndavanadasa is worth considering.

Sunilei kirtan karaye parihas... keha bole jnanayoga ediya vicar".

(*Caitanya-bhagavata—Adi*. IX)

Sridhara's philosophic contribution thus seems to have made a great impact upon later Orissan Vaisnava thinkers particularly the famous *pancasakha* writers. In this context they seemed to have been impressed by Samkara's acceptance of *bhakti* along with *maya*. Because Samkara himself stated that for a true devotee, Brahman or Paramesvara even advances an illusory form.

"Paramesvarasyapi icchabasat mayamayam rupam Sadhaka anugrahartham".

(*Brahma-Sutra-Bhasya*, I. 1, 20)

It seems that inspite of the admittance of *bhakti* the impact of the Advaita concept of *maya* is quite noticeable in some of the prominent Vaisnavite writings of Orissa. And in that way they are found to be very close to Sridhara's philosophic approach.

From all these brief discussions, we are led to conclude that Sridhara Svami was a notable Advaita writer of the medieval period who had profound influence particularly on the Vaisnava thinkers of eastern India.

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11. S. K. De, *Op. Cit*, p. 17. Here it may be pointed out that in the Puri tradition, Jagannath is also identified as Nrsimha.

12. G. P. Singhdeo, R. K. Pattnayak, S. P. Singhdeo, *Op. cit.*, p. 34 F. N.

13. S. K. De, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

14. Ramanarayan Vyas : *The Bhagavata Bhakti cult and three Advaita Acaryas*, Delhi, Nag Publishers, 1977, p. 96.

It is possible to cast doubt over this statement of Madhva on the ground that the name 'Samkara' found in the treatise under reference may not definitely imply the famous Sankaracharya. However, the matter does not appear to be decisive either way on the basic of the informations presently available.

15. Krsnadasa, *Caitanya-caritamrta* (*Madhya, VIII*, 45, 123), referred to by De, Op. Cit., p. 16.

16. *Caitanya-Candrodaya* (V. 21), referred to by De, Op. Cit., p. 14

17. *Caitanya-caritamrta* (XII. 22. 27) "advaita-vadam vinirasya bhakti-samsthapakam sviya-matam jagada" referred to by De, Op. Cit., p. 565.

18. *Caitanya-caritamrta* and Krsnadasa Kaviraj. (antya VII, 128.

"Sridhara Svami nindi nija tika kar Sridhara Svami nahin nane ete garva dhar Sridhara Svami prabhabete Bhagavata jani Jagadguru Sridhara Svami guru kari mani".

19. S. K. De, *Op. Cit.*, p. 20.

20. M. Neog, *Op. Cit.*, p. 223.

I am very much thankful to Dr. R. C. Pathak of Gauhati University who kindly revealed to me that one Oriya Jagadisha Mishra went from Puri to Assam from whom Sankaradeva got a copy of *Bhavartha Dipika* and after consultation of the same *Dipika* Sankaradeva prepared his own work on *Bhagavata*.

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SRIMAD BHAGAVATA AND THE EARLY BENGALI LITERATURE

Dr. Binayendra Nath Chaudhury

The Bhagavata i. e. *the Bhagavata Purana*, divided into 12 *skandhas* containing 332 chapters consisting of 18 thousand verses, is the most celebrated and popular work dedicated to the glorification of *visnu-krsna*. It has been exercising direct and powerful influence on the life and thought of innumerable followers of the Bhagavata Vaisnava religion all over India for centuries. Its wide popularity and veneration are proved by the existence of a great number of manu- scripts and explanatory works on the whole or part of the book, such as the *Bhagávata-katha-samgraha*, *Bhagavata-kaumudi*, *Bhagavata-krama-sandarbha*, *Bhagavata-campu*, *Bhagavata-curnika*, *Bhgavata-mahatmya*, *Bhagavata-rahasya*, *Bhagavata-sara-samgraha*, etc. and numerous translations into Indian vernaculars. According Dinesh Chandra Sen in Bengali alone there are 40 translations. (Ref. *History of Bengali Language and Literature* p. 220 ff.)

Regarding the date and authorship of the book it is stated in the Bhagavata itself that God Himself gave discourse to Brahma in catuhsloki which was handed over to Narada, who again gave it to Vyasadeva. According to the Vaisnava commentator Srijiva Goswami, at first Vyasadeva composed the Bhagavata in an abridged form which was narrated by Suka, son of Vyasa

to Pariksit, grand-son of Arjuna and then completed the Mahabharata and afterwards he enlarged the Bhagavata again (Ref. *Tattrasandarbha*, 48th Anuccheda), Without entering into the controversy of fixing the time of composition of the book attempted by modern European scholars like Burnouf, Wilson, Colebrooke, Winternitze, Farquhar, Pargiter, Eliot and Indian scholars like Haraprasad Sastri, D. R. Bhandarkar, D. S. Sastri and R. C. Hajra, ranging from pre-Christian era to the 13th century A.D., we may safely assume that the Bhagavata gained popularity in Northern India in an earlier period, as it was mentioned by Alberuni in 1030 A. D. It was mentioned in the *Vedanta tattvasara* of Ramanuja who belonged to the 11th century A. D. (Ref. Radhagovinda Nath : *Srimadbhagavatera Bhumika*, p. 8). In fact it is not unlikely that the Bhagavata, like other Puranas, got its enlarged form during the middle part of the Gupta period.

The Bhagavata doctrinal tenets and the human life and sports (*lila*) of Lord Krsna contained in the *Bhagavata Purana* (X-XII) attracted all classes of Indian people. The Bhagavata (Vaisnava) religion is the religion of devotional love for God i. e. loving communion with Visnu, the Supreme Being. This religion is also called Narayaniya, Sattvata, Ekantika or Pancaratra religion. It is Narayaniya, because of those who are devoted with their whole soul to Narayana; it is the religion of sattva or sattvata (holiness), it is the religion of the Ekantins who offer their whole-hearted devotion to God and it is Pancaratra, because, Narayana is said to have performed Pancaratra-satra (sacrifice continued for five days) and thereby obtained superiority over all beings (Ref. *Age of Impirial Unity*, p. 435). The germs of bhakti cult are traced in the Vedas, the Upanisads and the Maha-

bharata. The earliest reference to a personal God, out of which Vaisnavism arose may be found in the *Asta-dhyayi* of Panini who explains the word Vasudevaka in the sense of "a person whose object of bhakti is Vasudeva' who is probably identified with Vasudeva-krsna, a hero of the Yadava clan and leader of the religious movement of Bhagavatism as narrated in the epics and the Puranas. According to the Bhagavata Purana, if the persons to whom God shows his grace, shake off all hypocrisy and take refuge in Him with all their hearts, they transcend *maya* which contains *sattva* (illumination), *rajas* (activity) and *tamas* (inertia) and are purged of egoism and attain *moksa* (liberation). *The Bhagavata* preaches the cult of unmotived devotion (ahaituki bhakti) to God which fills the soul with bliss (II, 2. 6). It gives us the message that the actions that are done for the pleasure of God produce devotion which gives rise of knowledge (Yadatra kriyate karma bhagavat paritosanam/jnanam yattadadhinam hi bhaktiyogasamanvitam—I.5,35). Therefore we should surrender all our actions to God without any desire for their fruits and the complete surrender of soul to God is the highest truth According to *the Bhagavata* the path of devotion is open to all, Even the candala is purged of impurity of his castelby firm devotion to God. Even a person of low birth is liberated from bondage if he utters the name of God only once. (Aho vata svapacohato gariyan yajjihvagre vartate nama tubhyam / te pustapaste juhuvuh sasnu rarya brahma nu curnama grnanti ye te. III.33,7) Later on Sri Caitanya adopted this liberal outlook of *the Bhagavata* and inculcated that even the candala who is devoted to God is superior to a brahmana (Ref. *Radhakrushna*. Indian Philosophy, Vol. II (1927) pp' 708-9, Bipin Chandra Pal, *Bengal Vaisnavism* (1933, p. 129).

In the *Bhagavata* Krsna is not mere an incarnation (*avatara*) of Visnu but he is the Lord Himself (Krsnastu Bhagaban Svayam—I.3,28). He is 'brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavaniti sabdyate (I.2,11). He appeared in the world as the son of Vasudeva in the womb of Devaki to destroy Kamsa, king of Mathura, his maternal uncle. Just after birth he was taken by his father from Mathura to Gokula and kept on the bed of Nandagopa's wife Yasoda, who also gave birth to a daughter a while before, who again was brought to Devaki as replacement. Kamsa, when learnt the birth of the issue, was ready to kill the baby but refrained after hearing the divine proclamation that the eighth issue of Devaki could not be a daughter. Then Kamsa ordered for large-scale child-assassination in the region of Mathura-Gokula. Putana and other assassins, sent by Kamsa, came to kill the children in the house of Nanda but faced their death instead. Krsna began to grow with Balarama, son of Nanda by another wife Revati and became the most favourite of all *gopas* and *gopis* at Gokula. Then they came to Vrndavana where Krsna performed miracles like holding up the mount Govardhan, and *rasas* (feeling ecstatic joy) with *gopis*. At last Krsna and Balarama started for Mathura with Akrur, a messenger of Kamsa to join boxing. The Vrajabadhus bid adieu to Krsna with tears. At Mathura Krsna not only tamed Kuvalayapida and killed Canur and Mustika but also killed Kamsa to protect the world from oppression.

Though the existence of Vaisnavism in Bengali in the 5th century A. D. is testified by archaeological evidences unearthed from various localities, the study and cult of the Bhagavata started at a later date. Krsna legend perhaps formed an essential element of Vaisnavism in Bengal as early as the 6th/7th century A. D.

If the identifications of the sculptures discovered at Paharpur, Rajshahi, (Bangladesh), representing various incidents from the life of Krsna, such as uprooting the twin Arjun trees, killing of the demon kesin, etc., the fight of Krsna and Balarama with Canura and Mustika, holding up the mount Govardhana, amorous activities with the gopis, etc. events which are similar to the episodes of *Bhagavata* are correct then we may surmise that the Krsna legend and the *Bhagavata* were very popular in Bengal in the 7th century A. D. (Ref. *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, pp. 400-401). But the literary evidences in connection with the beginning of the Bhagavata study belong to a late period Dr. Sukumar Sen opines that the *Bhagavata Purana* was not known in Bengal before the fifteenth century A. D. Because, he argues, there is no mention of the *Bhagavata* in Sarvananda's (12th century) *Tika Sarvasva* though he quoted from many Puranas including the Visnupurana and the Harivamsa. Moreover, Brhaspati Misra, Rayamukuta (a Vaisnava) also has not mentioned the name of the *Bhagavata* in his *Padacandrika*, a commentry on the *Amarokosa*. But at the same time Dr. Sen admits that Maladhara Basu was engaged in translating the B*hagavata* into Bengali in 1473 and Sanatana, a minister Sultan Hossain Shah of Ganda was discussing the B*hagavata* at that time and a manuscript of the B*hagavata* copied by Vidyapati was found at Terhut in 1468. So Dr. Sen thinks that the B*hagavata* was established in Bengal in the second part of the 15th century and it was first preached by Madhabendra Puri (Ref. *Vidyapati* Gosthi, p. 17, B*angla Sahityera Itihasa*, Prathama Khanda, Purvardha, pp. 95-96). But according to the *Caitanya* B*hagavata* of Vrndavanadasa, Advaita Acarya, a friend of Sri Caitanya's father Jagannatha Misra recognised

Madhabendra Puri at the first sight as the 'Bhagavatiya Vaiṣnava'. Madhabendra came to the house of Advaita while the latter was teaching the Gita-Bhagavata with devotion.(Ref. *Caitanya Bhagavata*, pp. 426-429) Maladhara Basu also informs that he heard the *Bhagavata* from the mouth of Pandits.

Bhagavata suni ami panditera mukhe
(*Srikrsnavijaya*, e, u, p. 3)

Therefore we may conjecture that the *Bhagavata*. gained popularity among the Vaisnavas of Bengal sufficiently before the advent of SriCaitanya who was the disciple of Isvara Puri, a disciple of Madhabendra Puri who was the field [maker of the great bhakti movement under the leadership of Sri Caitanya who admitted it with respect, Vrndavanadasa writes.

"Bhaktirase adi Madhabendra Sutradhara" / Gauracandra iha kahiyachena varevara (Caitanya Bhagavata, ch. 6, slok 301).

Bhagavata and the Srikrsnakirtan

Srikrsnakirtan, title given by Basanta Ranjan Ray Vidyatballabha, the editor of the collected manuscript written by Babu Candidasa, is the oldest Bengali poem on the Krsna legend excluding the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva being written in Sanskrit. The poem is remarkable in more than one respect. On the evidence of the old style of writing and language it may be assigned to the early fifteenth century. Though the influence of the *Bhagavata* is traced in some parts, Badu Candidasa has shown a greater independence in narrating the story of Krsna. He might have followed the manner of Jayadeva and collected materials from other Puranas also.

He has borrowed the character of Radha from the *Gita-govinda* as no prominence was given to Radea in the Puranas and he gave shape to it in his own way. The poem is divided into several khandas (chapters), viz, Janmakhanda, Tambulakhanda, Danakhanda, Nauka-khanda, Bharakhanda, Chatrakhanda, Vrndavanakhanda, Vamsikhanda and Radhavirahakhanda. The lost portion of the manuscript was not found so it is not possible to know how the poem ended. Unlike the *Bhagavata*, the tone of the poem is human and not in the least devotional. To the poet Krsna and Radha were not symbols of devotional effusions, rather they are described as a pair of common lovers.

In the *Srikrsnakirtan* Badu Candidasa deviated much from the *Bhagavata*. Here (Janmakhanda) he designated Krsna as an *Avatara* of Visnu instead of calling him the Lord Himself. He has not followed the *Bhagavata* in describing the character of Narada, murder of Yamalarjuna and the degree of love between Krsna and Radha. While Krsna in the *Bhagavata* makes common love with the gopies in *Srikrsnakirtan* he shows his whole hearted love to Radha. Here (Danakhanda) he addresses Radha with the words: "mama sukhetara-vadhaisini" i. e. wisher of destruction of my sorrow. She is the sakti of Krsna. Here he has performed rasalila only to satisfy Radha. But the similarity between the *Bhagavata* and the *Srikrsna kirtan* is not negligible. Events after the birth of Krsna have been described in the same way (Ref. *Srikrsnakirtan*, Janmakhanda p. 2; *Bhagavata* X. 3, 50). Description of rasa in the Vrnda-vanakhanda and expression of grief of the ladies of Vrndavana are definitely influenced by the *Bhagavata*.

Bhagavata and the Srikrsnavijaya

The earliest Bengali narrative poem surely influenced by the Bhagavata is the Srikrsnavijaya written by Maladhara Basu who got the nick-name Gunaraja Khan conferred by the Sultan Ruknuddin Barbak Shah. The poem enterely based on the *Bhagavata.* was completed in seven years (1473-80). It is entirely narrative but filled with devotional spirit and sincere tone. *Sri Caitanya* in his boyhood regularly heard the poem sung frequently Krsnadasa Kaviraja says through mouth of Sri Caitanya :

Gunaraja khana kaila Srikrsnavijaya
Tnaha eka vakya tnara ache premamaya.
(Caitanyacaritamrta, Madhya, 15,100-102)

The poem is nothing but the Bengali translation of the gist of the *Bhagavata*, Sri Khagendra Nath Mitra in his edition of the *Srikrsnavijaya* and Dr. Gita Chattopadhyay in her thesis entitled *Bhagavata* Bengafi Sahitya have quoted hundreds of examples showing similarity between the *Bhagavata* and the *Srikrsnavijaya* in language and expressions which need not be repeated here.

Life and thought of Sri Caitanya were greatly influenced by the *Bhagavata.* He was fond of listening to the *Bhagavata* reading. When grown up Sri Caitanya (Nimai Pandita) opened a catuspathe with a band of scholar pupils when he went to Gaya he met a Vaisnava scholar and spiritual leader, Isvara Pure who converted him to the bhakti cult. This initiation created a wonderful effect on him it revealed a new phase of his life and brought to his heart the most fascinating charms of *Srikrsna*, so that he forgot, for the time being, his pupils, his reputation, his old mother and even his charming wife Visnupriya. He returned home, but quite a new

man sometimes shedding tears in pensive mood as if in deep sorrow of separation from *Krsna* the Lord of his heart. He realised God and His sweetness and realised the relation of his soul to God. Then he abolished his caluspathe and organised samkirtan, i. e. singing of the name of God (Hari) in chorus accompanied by musical instruments. He felt a strong desire for giving to all the divine bless of loving God and spent the first six years of his asceticism in preaching tours and at last came to Nilacala (Puri) where he stayed for 18 years. "He passed the last 12 years of his life almost incessantly in spiritual trances—sometimes in raplusions joy of union with *Srikrsna*—always identifying himself with *Sriradha*, the most beloved of *Srikrsna*. (Ref. The Cultural Herilage of India, Vol. II, p. 133). His Radhabhava is identical with gopibhava of the *Bhagavata* (X, 32.8) for communion with Lord *krsna*, *Sri Caitanya* was so successful in proselytizing his *prema bhakti-dharma* that he came to be regarded as avatara like *Krsna* by people and his biographers. Many biographers were written thousands of lyrical songs (padas) were compored on *krsna bhakti* by the Vaisnava Mahajanas. Thus a vast *Vaisnava Padavali Sahitya* and *Bhaktidarsana* developed in Bengal.



INCARNATION IN *THE BHAGAVATAM* AND EVOLUTION

Rabi Narayan Dash

Incarnation is birth taken by God almighty in a living form to preach new ideas and to rectify evils in the society. He takes various forms of life to save the world and to change its course when found to be leading away from good. In *the Bhagavatam* it is noted that God takes birth under the influence of illusion or *Maya* (1 : 3 : 35.). As such, all incarnations of God can be termed as his form transformed in illusion. Further, it is told that 'the living form' also takes its birth in illusion like that of God. So all the living beings are created symbolising the almighty to perform 'different functions. They are, to some extent, incarnations of the God in mini-forms for limited performances. Further, it has been shown that from among the incarnations of God some are his integral parts and others due to his grace (1 : 3 : 28.). The differences observed between the integral part and grace can well be visualised between the incarnation and the living creatures. It can be expressed that power, vision and mode of action seen in a living being or a particular person for the creation of a new order or to spread new values that influences others in the society are those of an incarnation. He is attributed with the qualities of a super-power, i. e. of God. So it is called that he is God almighty in a new form. But these incarnated shape or forms come under the laws of evolution. In short, the delayed or belated change that takes place towards development in the

living beings result in the creation of further powerful forms capable of opening new avenues of progress in its course. This idea of incarnation is seen depicted in *the Bhagavatam*, an ancient religious treatise of India. When examined closely it is found that the same comes under the purview of the laws of evolution.

In *the Bhagavatam* expositions have been made of the incarnations (1 : 3). Bhagavatam is the essence and the gist brought out from the Vedas by sage Suka and narrated for the benefit of the people. The fifth question asked by Sanaka and other hermits to Suka in the Naimishya forest was about the incarnations of God (1 : 1 : 13). The sages have requested him to narrate before them about the sacred incarnations of God (1 : 1 : 18) having borne the idea that God takes incarnation at his own. Specific mention of sacred incarnation indicates about other incarnations also. But these, though termed as incarnations, have failed to cast deep impacts on the society for which the same could not be included in the galaxy of sacred incarnations. In later phases those responsible for the good of the world were considered as incarnations. It is inferred from this and subsequent slokas of *the Bhagavatam*.

At the outset Suka has indicated about Purusha beside other incarnations of God (1 : 3) and stated his nature. It is said to have possessed sixteen unique qualities. From the same eleven attributes are in the form of organs and five as Mahabhutas, such as, earth, water, light, air and the empty space or sky. On the other hand these sixteen qualities are expressed in the form of magnanimity, pride and panchatanmatras, i. e. sound, touch, vision, smell and taste (1 : 3 : 1), Purusha was in deep slumber at the Ekarnava or the great ocean. His naval was a lotus flower

with the dimension of a great lake. Brahma, the creator of all the living beings of the world took birth from this naval. If Brahma, the preserver of the 'Bindu' or drop would be taken as the earliest incarnation then the earliest manifestation of life was started from the 'drop'. This drop can be equated with the uni-cellular jelly of the sea. In short, the jelly resembling a lotus flower probably evolved in the deep ocean (1 : 3 : 2). As its various limbs, different living beings sprang up from this jelly imitating purusha in miniature form. These limbs are manifested together in the life of innumerable living beings aptly viewed by ascetics in their perceptible knowledge.

The Bhagavatam mentions that the living being is formless (1 : 3 : 30). The knowledge is its form and it is due to life. As such, life is the basis of all knowledge and can be thought of as one with the same. In spite of all, knowledge can be differentiated from life. For instance, knowledge survives life and can be felt and witnessed in its manifestations. In other words, lives of all the living beings taken together make this purusha. In *the Bhagavatam* life is depicted as consciousness extended to all the living creatures (1 : 3 : 4). Again, this Purusha or Visvarupa is the root of all incarnations created from him. After all creations he remains complete and is also present in all living forms to work in various ways. Although he is the cause of all creations he is not the seed. On the other hand seed is created from him and is widely distributed. For instance, Brahma sprang up from him from whom Prajapatis like Marichi, Angira, etc. descended. From the God the Prajapatis, from them the heavenly beings and divergently the human beings appeared (1 : 3 : 5). If divergence is accepted as the cause of human emergence as noted in *the Bhagavatam* then the theory of evolution has certain identity of ground expressed

by the same. Man is said to have evolved from the unicellular living organisms through a number of divergent evolutions. For example, the vertebrates have evolved from the non-vertebrates and the men from the tailed monkeys, through divergent evolutions in a delayed process.

The incarnations mentioned in *the Bhagavatam* include Brahma, Sukara (the boar), Narada, Naranarayana, Kapila, Dattatreya, Rishabha I, Rishabha II, Prthuraja, Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Dhanvantari, Mohini, Narasimha (man-lion), Vamana (dwarf), Parasurama (Rama with hatchet in hand), Vyasa, Rama, Ramakrishna (Balarama and Krishna together), Buddha and Kalki (1 : 3). From these incarnations the last two are ordained to take their birth in future. The rest are said to have already taken their birth and played their part as incarnations. Even, the sphere of action of the last two incarnations are determined. As such, it can be concluded that these two incarnations might have played their part prior to the composition of *the Bhagavatam*. If it is not so then the two incarnations are created later and interpolated into *the Bhagavatam* at a subsequent date with the suggestion that they would be taking their births at a future date. Again, Kalki has found place in *the Mahabharata* whereas Buddha is conspicuous in his absence. So it can be construed that Buddha either appeared during the composition of *the Mahabharata* but failed to make any impact on the society or soon after its composition. But to the time of the composition of *the Bhagavatam* the impact of Buddha on the society has already been felt. As such, his inclusion in *the Bhagavatam* had become a matter of fact.

Among the Puranas that have noted Buddha as an incarnation mention may be made of Harivamsa, Vishnu, Baraha, Agni, Visvakasena Samhita and Vishnu Sahashra-

nama. Thus it can be felt that this incarnation has much widely been propagated during the time of the composition of these puranas. The earliest record to mention Buddha is the Baraha perumal temple inscription of Mahabali Puram in Tamilnadu belonging to the 8th cent. A. D. So after the appearance of Buddha in the 6th cen. B. C. and during the hay day of Buddhism it is quite improbable to convert him as an incarnation. Only after Brahmanism reasserted itself bringing in the decline of Buddhism this idea might have occured. As such, Buddha was probably intended to swell the galaxy of incarnations in the Hindu pantheon delivering a death blow to the Buddhistic movement that had almost paralysed the Brahmanical creed and its social functioning. Thus, ultimately Buddhism was engulfed completely in Hindusim living almost no trace of the methods and ways of its extinction. Sankaracharya was the last weapon in that long drawn fight waged probably during the 4th cen. A. D when Guptas of Magadha emerged as powerful monarchs in the Indian scene. Puranas might have been composed to indicate Buddha as an incarnation which dwarfed him and belittled the existence of Buddhism so vigourously preached by him. Most likely Bhagavatam incorporated Buddha as an incarnation during this time, to give a boost to the rising Vaishnavism. In order to patronise Vaishnavism a number of incarnations were contemplated in the Bhagavatam and it was intended to show that Buddha is but an usual phase in the flow of incarnations.

The Bhagavatam mentions that there is no limit to the number of incarnations taken by God (1 : 3 : 26). Observation of the form of incarnations reveals that they are not confined to human appearances alone. Rather they have extended to different forms of life. Hence, the theory of evolution applies to the concept of incarnations shown in

the Bhagabatam. As all the incarnations have not sprang up at any particular time they might have taken certain courses in their progressive arrangement. Looking into the successive orders of the incarnations in the Bhagavatam one arrives at no direction. But during the 8th cen. A. D. Sankaracharya noted the succession of Incarnations in his Dasavatara stotram in an appropriate manner. They are arranged to some extent as per the evolutionary process of living beings. From among the numerous incarnations described in the Bhagavatam Sankaracharya weeded out many considered irrelevant to his theory of ten incarnations.

There is mention of Vamana or dwarf incarnation in the Rigveda. In later times Vamana has found place in the Aitareya Brahmana and Taittiriya Samhita. In a few more Brahmanas and Aranyaka Upanisads there are dipiction of fish, tortoise and boar incarnations, In the Mahabharata there is mention of swan, tortoise, fish, boar, man-lion (Narasimha) dwarf, Rama (Parasurama), Rama Dasarathi and Kalki incarnations. In the Bhagavat Gita there is the concept noted in clear terms that God takes incarnations whenever needed. So during the composition of the Bhagavatam many incarnations have been imagined and efforts have been made to justify them. In spite of the same there is no reference to the swan (Hansa) incarnation of the Mahabharata in the Bhagavatam. Instead, Brahma took the place of swan in the same.

There are prolific references and descriptions of incarnations in religious literatures found during the rise of Vaishnavism. So innumerable narrations relating to them are met with in the Vaishnava religious texts, stotras and stutis. Since only ten incarnations figure in the inscriptions after 8th cen. A. D. it can justifiably be surmised that they

have been inscribed after Sankaracharya appeared in the Indian religious scene. But as only twenty one incarnations have specifically been mentioned in the Bhagavatam, though innumerable have assidiously been mentioned, it can well be accepted that only twenty one were known during the composition of the Bhagavatam.

Depictions about Brahma, Narada, Naranarayana, Kapila, Dattatreya, Rishabha I and II, Prthuraja, Dhanvantari, Mohini and Vyasa incarnations have not been taken into consideration by Sankaracharya though they occur in the Bhagavatam. But the other incarnations have been adopted by him. The Ramakrishna incarnation of the Bhagavatam indicate Balarama and Krishna together. They have been shown as one but separated in two forms. The ten incarnations adopted by Sankaracharya have been depicted in the Bhagavatam as per the following order—the boar (2nd), fish (10th), tortoise (11th), Narasimha (14th), dwarf (15th), Parasurama (16th), Rama (18th), Buddha (20th) and Kalki (21st). Since dwarf, fish, tortoise and Narasimha incarnations have been found in the Veda, Brahmana and Upanishadas they can be construed as the earliest in their creation. Sanakaracharya accepting them as earlier forms re-arranged them with some modification such as fish, tortoise, Narasimha and dwarf in order of preference. Thus the evolutionary process in India is seen to have a lot of similarity with the experimental evolutionary process of the living organisms propounded in the west.

The boar incarnations found depicted in the Bhagavatam is not seen in the religious treatises like the Veda, Brahmana and Upanishads. But the root of this incarnation found in the Bhagavatam occur in the Mahabharat. Even

representation of the mythic boar is found in the rock paintings of middle India belonging to the prehistoric times. Discussions have been made regarding Buddha earlier. Parasurama, Rama and Kalki have also made their inroads late into the galaxy of incarnations and Mahabharata bears earliest testimony to the same.

The Bhagavatam is well-known as a Vaishnava religious text. Besides the incarnations of the Bhagavatam discussed earlier the rest are not found in the process of evolution. The contributions made by outstanding human beings towards moral and disciplined development of the society and the exposition of new philosophical ideas have been raised to this status in the Bhagavatam. In this way incarnations like Brahma, Narada, Naranarayana, Kapila, Dattareya, Rishava I and II, Prthuraja, Dhanvantari, Mohini, Vyasa, etc. have been included in the galaxy of incarnations. From that point of view the moral practice taught by Brahma to the human beings has been regarded as an essential part of human development for which he was dubbed as the first incarnation in the Bhagavatam. If the swan incarnation of the Mahabharata is compared and made one with Brahma of the Bhagavatam, whose career is swan, then it can be concluded that this incarnation has been brought from the former. Narada has been conceived of as the propounder of Pancharatra Vaishnaba Tantram to attain the status of an incarnation. The other Vaishnaba philosophers like Naranarayana the follower of 'Atmopasana Paddhati' Kapila Nivrtti way philosopher, etc. were raised to God-hood equivalent to that of incarnations. So also Rishava II, the 8th incarnation of the Bhagavatam, emphacised the Paramahansa principles of Philosophy and ways relating to it for

which he was made an incarnation. But Rishava I brought in new dimensions in the administration methods for which he was equated with Indra and was given the status of an incarnation. Prthuraja, the 9th incarnation of *the Bhagavatam*, was the first to find out various medicines from the roots and herbs, to cure people The 12th incarnation was Dhanvantari who was successful in discovering nectar for the godly men or personages. He was infallible in providing a healthy life to the people enriching the science of treatment. The 13th incarnation was Mohini who provided nectar to the Gods depriving the demonic persons. Thus it is seen that this group of incarnations were responsible for the spread of various philosophies, rules and regulations, religion, healthy life and beneficial administration, etc. for which they were termed accordingly. Hence, the idea behind the promotion of incarnations in *the Bhagavatam* rests on the general well-being of the people and enhancement of Vaishnav religious faith among them.

Though all the incarnations mentioned in *the Bhagavatam* are shown in twenty one number yet they can be classified into three categories. These categories can be termed as evolution of the living beings towards human form, evolution of tools and population control, and the evolution of principles and ways for the general weal of the society.

Under the first category are included Brahma, Fish, Tortoise, boar, Narasimha and dwarf incarnations, Brahma incarnation represents the First living organism created in the world. The fish is the first vertebrate of the world created in the water. This is followed by Tortoise the living being that could live in water and land. After this the Boar evolved with limbs to raise its body and a

tail less developed. This animal could frequent the water though living in the land. The Narasimha incarnation is another step towards the evolution of full fledged human beings. The human body and lion head indicate the emergence of human form with the beastly qualities found in the early primitive men. The Vamana incarnation is another step towards the evolution of man in complete human form. However, these human beings are conceived of as dwarfs because they were unable to make and use weapons of offence and defence. Thus Vamana completes the first category in the evolution of human forms.

The second category of incarnations indicates a different phase of evolution. Among them figure Parasurama, Rama, Ramakrishna, Rishavall Buddha, and Kalki. Parasurama appeared as the first hunter and warrior preparing and using the tool. Probably this incarnation is represented by the first hatchet using man. The hatchet could be conceived of as stone copper, bronze and iron or may be representative of all these technological phases of development. The warrior remains unchanged while the technology has undergone changes through these phases. Parasurama was replaced by Rama Dasarathi. Probably he represented the first bow and arrow using human hunter. The arrow might be tipped with stone, bone, antler, wood, copper, bronze and ultimately iron. Rama Dasarathi might be the representative of the first missile using hunter evolved towards a crafty human race. The Rama-Krishna incarnation is a new concept. Two incarnations have been fused into one in this probably due to their contemporaneity and closeness to each other in accomplishing a new social order based on a different cultural complex. Rama or Balarama was the first to introduce the plough ushering

in agricultural methods for subsistence. It was a new cultural phenomenon in the Indian society. The plough replaced the ways of the nomadic food gathering hunter. It raised permanent settlements for agricultural operations, created surplus of food and leisure, developed family and society for the speedy growth of population. Krishna was supplementing the plough by raising livestocks, training them for the yoke and utilising them as reserve supply of food it times of scarcity. He was also responsible for the protection of this culture along with Balarama. Probably he was first to invent wheels for speedy transport of materials and continued chase in the warfields. It is very likely that he was conceived of as the God with a wheel as his weapon. Thus both the inventive genius taken together brought in a new social revolution for which they were regarded as incarnations in a single form. As such, *Bhagavatam* made them incarnations in a combined form. Production of bumper crops caused speedy growth of population in amazing directions without social restrictions or moral values. This became catastrophic. As such, the first moral restraint was prescribed to the people by Rishava, the Jain preacher, who advocated a life of austerity in the society. The effect of this was all likely to have continued till Buddha emerged and emphacised a stricter moral prescription in life guided through the religious and monastic disciplines. If the Jaina Rishava is equated with Rishava II of *the Bhagavatam* mentioned as the 8th incarnation who was responsible for the preaching of Paramahansa philosophy then it will be clear that the moral restraints shown and preached by the religious propounders were intended to check the growth of population. But this experiment failed miserably since moral restraints could not provide adequate preventive measures in controlling human emotions and desires and

ultimately the human nature. Thus the monastic life prescribed by Buddha could not succeed against the family life of the people to check the growth of population. The exolosion of population created wars and battles bringing upheval in the social life and catastrophe to the Indian continent. The superior striking force got the upperhand in this turmoil. Hence, this superior striking force was imagined as Kalki incarnation. It may be that this incarnation stands for mass destruction through a new type of weapon carried by superfast moving vehicles or carrier. Thus ends the second category of incarnations.

The third and the last category of incarnations include Narada, Naranarayana, Kapila, Dattatreya, Rishava I Prthuraja, Dhanvantari, Mohini and Vyasa. These incarnations convey new philosophies, promote thoughts and consciousnesses relating to the good of the society, make discoveries of useful nature such as herbs, roots, etc. for medicinal purposes and other types. They devised ways to bring order and success in the life of individuals and society as well. Rishava I brought political discipline by providing a well administrative set up to the society. Prthuraja and Dhanvantari were the exponents of a healthy society free from diseases. They made available the provisions of treatment to the easy reach of all. The Mohini incarnation was the protector of honest and godly persons by providing long indestructible life. Vyasa was responsible for the codification of treatises in the interest of various groups. Thus he was the first to bring in division of labour for the speedy developnent of the society. As such, he was bestowed with the status of an incarnation.

In the Indian concept an ordered society combined with moral disciplines, happiness and a long span of healthy individual life figures. The outstanding persons who have contributed towards this goal were upgraded to the position of incarnations, The incarnation concept of India has to some extent parallel to the evolution theory of the West based on the evidences of fossilized and living organisms of the world. But the Indian incarnation concept conveys an evolutionary process more advanced in the context of social change for a prosperous order.

THE BIRTH LEGEND OF KRISNA IN *THE BHAGAVATA PURANA*

Dr. Upendranath Dhal

Lord Krsna is well-known as one of the most interesting and important characters in our myths. To a common Hindu, he is considered to be the saviour in distress and last resort of all. Historically speaking, he has developed through three stages : firstly, Krsna is the chief of the Yadavas, who served as Arjuna's charioteer in the Bharata war; secondly, He is the God incarnate, the instructor of Arjuna and through him, of all mankind and thirdly, the Krsna of Gokula, the God brought up among cowherds, the mischievous child and the endearing lover (found in the *Puranas*). Ultimately these myths must have been melted one with the other to form a full character of Krsna, the redeemer of mankind. Whatever may be the background of his past, he is worshipped as the Supreme Lord. Our scriptures like the Mahabharata, Harivamsa and the *Puranas* are regarded to be holy and sacred as they depict the glories of Krsna, As the cult deity of the Vaisnavas his birth, childhood pranks and exploits are held in high esteem. Devout Hindus regard it as meritorious to hear it on various occasions. Among them his birth legend is very popular.[1] An humble attempt has been

made here to trace the origin of his birth legend leading to its development in the *Bhagavata Purana*.

Tha Mahabharata (Sabhaparvan, Ch. 38) contains cursory reference to Krsna's childhood deeds. Here Sisupala alludes in a very contemptuous manner to his valorous deeds such as the killing of Putana and others, which are done in the cow settlement, whereas Bhisma's praise therein does not contain any reference to such deeds. As they are conspicuous by their absence in the Mahabharata it appears, the development of this part of the story was not known by that time. But the Harivamsa, which had the immense good fortune to be accepted as an appendix to the Mahabharata, is a Krsnaite work, prepared with the utmost care and skill from old materials to be used to strengthen the cult of Visnu. Since it is Krsnaite in character, it deals with the birth of Krsna and develops through all his exploits etc. For this purpose it has to elaborate the birth of Krsna through five chapters (Chs. 44-48).

Of the *Puranas*, the Vayu (2. 34. 217-228) refers to the birth of Krsna and Samkarsana in course of narrating Yaduvamsa, whereas the Agni (12.1-12) and the Padma (6.272.1-62), though contain the account of Krsna are mere summaries compiled from other sources, and lack details. Though shorter in form, the *Brahma Purana* account (Chs.181-183) gives the story exactly in the same manner as the *Visnu Purana*. Closer to Harivamsa comes the Visnu, which sprang from the Pancaratra Vaisnava sect. Though in its theology it follows in the main, the *Bhagavata Gita* and other Vaisnava documents of the didactic epic, its fifth book tells the story of Krsna in the Harivamsa tone. On the other hand one can find

the *Bhagavata Purana*, which is Krsnaite in character, pure and simple. While the Harivamsa and the Visnu deal with the life span of Krsna, the *Bhagavata* scarcely refers to his later life, but dwells on his boyhood and youth at length and is distinguishable from others for its new theory of Bhakti. The birth story in the *Bhagavata* is more elaborate than the Harivamsa and the Visnu. In order to trace the chronological development of the legend in the texts, the story may be divided into the following sections—

A) Prelude to the birth of Krsna.

B) The birth and the after-effect.

Let us take the sections one after the other.

A) *Prulude to the Birth of Krsna*

a) *Harivamsa 44-47*

As to the birth story of Krsna, the Harivamsa states : The Earth approached the gods on mount Meru and complained of her distress. Like a boat going down in water, she had reached the state of virtual collapse and it was no more possible for her to withstand the torture and oppression of Kamsa and others. She reminded Visnu of his protection received through different manifestations in different ages and appealed him for help to lighten her burden—(bharasaithilikarana.) After due deliberation Visnu and other gods plan to descend on earth to destroy Kamsa and others. When such planning was going on Narada came by that way and knew the future course of action of gods. Then he ran to Kamsa at Mathura to inform him the scheme of the high gods. He also emphasised for the first time

that his (Kamsa's) slayer would be the baby born on the eighth conception (garbha) of Devaki, his paternal-cousin-sister (pitrsvasa). And without naming the God, he just hinted that the slayer is greater than Brahma—*parato pi paras tvesam Svayambhus ca Svayambhuvam* and is the greatest wonder—*mahadadhutam* and is divine. In course of his narration Narada reminded that he had the same lot in the previous birth and cautioned him to take cognizance of that conception (garbha) of Devaki. Thus saying Narada disappeared.

After Narada's departure, Kamsa, puffed up with courage ordered his associates like Kesi, Pralamba, Dhenuka, Arista, Putana and Kaliya to wander on the earth to kill all those, who are hostile to Kamsa and also directed them to have watch over each and every concep-tion of mortals. As predicted by Narada he ordered his ministers to arrange for the destruction of all the embryos of Devaki'. For favour of over vigilance he confined both Vasudeva and Devaki to the prison and appointed female attendants to keep watch over the movement of the couple.

According to the plan of the Gods, Visnu was certain that he had to place himself in the eighth concep-tion of Devaki. As regards the other seven embryos, the six conceptions happened to be the six sons of the demon Kalanemi, who survived the Tarakamaya fight and lay in water in the nether region in an embryonic stage. In such form they practised arduous penance and grew all powerful due to the blessings of Brahma. Like Hiranyakasipu, the father of Kalanemi, they desired to be invincible by gods, Yaksas, Gandharvas and men. Hiranyakasipu grew jealous and cursed them to be killed by their father Kalanemi only, who would be born as

Kamsa. Thus these six demons (sadgarbhas) had to remain dormant in the nether region.

These six embryos lying in a room filled with water were noticed by Visnu in the nether resion. Pulling out their vital breath by entering their bodies he handed them over under the care of the goddess Sleep (Nidra). She was advised to place the Sadgarbhas in the womb of Devaki one after the other for the purpose. And Samkarsana, as the seventh conception of Devaki was to be transferred and would be accepted as the elder brother to Krisna. Such transfer would be accepted as abortion for fear of Kamsa. Visnu specifically directed the goddess Sleep to remain in the womb of Yasoda as the eighth conception. Both of them would be born in the same night in the eighth month of pregnancy and would be exchanged between Devaki and Yasoda. Thus duped when Kamsa would attempt to kill her (Goddess Nidra) she would escape from his hands. In view of her such onerous duty she would be admitted into the galaxy of gods in heaven and would be favoured with the supremacy of the three world. In subsequent ages she would be born as Kausiki on the Vindhya mountain and would be instrumental for the death of Sumbha and Nisumbha. On the ninth day (tithi) she would be adored with animal sacrifice etc. Thus assured goddess Sleep decided to execute the plan and programme of Visnu. Thereafter both of them disappeared.

Here the tradition introduces Narada, who is friend to both, the gods and the demons. In the assembly of the gods it is Narada, who prevails upon Visnu to incarnate on earth with the sole purpose of killing Kamsa, who in his previous birth was the great demon Kalanemi. On the other hand he also informs Kamsa the course of

action of gods against him. Had it not been so, Kamsa would not have cared to kill all the babies born of Devaki by putting both Devaki and Vasudeva inside the prison and also would not have deputed his aides one after the other for slaying Krsna.

(b) *Visnu Purana 5. 1-3; Bhagavata Purana 10 .1.1-54, cf. Brahma Purana 181.*

Out of these texts in the Visnu Purana Maitreya wants to know how Visnu came upon the earth and was born in the family of Yadu and Parasara goes on narrating the story. Whereas *the Bhagavata* introduces it through Suka in response to king Pariksita's query as to the exploits of Visnu in an elaborate manner.

When we move to the description proper, we mark slight modification of the story : When Vasudeva and Devaki were returning after their marriage, Kamsa was driving their car as the charioteer. On the way Kamsa heard an incorporal voice informing him that the eighth child of Devaki would take away his life. Hearing this Kamsa became furious and drew his sword to kill Devaki, but due to the interference and assurance of Vasudeva that he would deliver every child that Devaki brings forth, Kamsa refrained from it. Instead of Narada as the informant in the HV, here the voice in the sky is introduced.

As like the HV version the Visnu Purana continues. The Earth over-burdened by her load retired to mount Meru to inform her sad plight and seek redress. Instead of the Earth in an anthropomorphic form, the Bh. P. states that she appeared in the form of a cow to ventilate her suffering. Whereas the ViP records a long statement of

the Earth, the Bh. P. makes it shorter. Then both the versions run almost parallel. Brahma, attended by the gods retired to the northern coast of the milky ocean and began to eulogize Visnu reciting Purusa Sukta. Hari was pleased to appear before them and enquire about their problems, but the Bh. P. does not bring Visnu to the scene but informs Brahma through a voice uttered in the sky.

The remedy suggested by the ViP. version is something unusual. The supreme lord plucked off two hairs, one white and one black and said that these hairs would descend upon earth to relieve her burden of distress—

ujjahar atmanah kesau sitakrsnau mahamune (59)
uvaca ca suran etau matkesau vasudhatale
avatirya bhuvo bhara-klesahanim karisyatah (60)

ViP 5.1.59-60

Thereafter the future course of action as related in the HV continues in the ViP (5.1) as well as in the Bh. P. (10.2.8ff) in similar strain. The Bh. P. only adds, Samkarsana, who would precede the lord, is the thousand-headed, self-effulgent lord Ananta (the serpent-god Sesa), a part manifestation of lord Vasudeva :

Vasudeva-kala Anantah sahasravadanah svarat
agrato bhavita devo Hareh priyacikirsaya.

Thus the preliminary preparation for the incarnation of Visnu is over.

(B) *The Birth of Krsna and its after effect*

(a) *Harivamsa 48*

The myth of the birth of Krisna as an incarnation of Visnu is mysterious and interesting. The HV maintains,

Devaki bore six children one after the other and they were killed by Kamsa. The seventh conception of Devaki was transferred to Rohini, the eldest wife of Vasudeva. This child born of Rohini was taken as the elder brother of Krisna. Because his embryo was pulled out from Devaki's womb and planted in Rohini, he was called Samkarsana.[1]

Immediately after that Devaki conceived the eighth embryo, which was well-protected, as Visnu had taken abode in her. Yasoda, the wife of Nanda-Gopa conceived on the same day to goddess Nidra. As she originated from Visnu, she was at his beck and call. And this Nidra was responsible for implanting seven conceptions in Devaki and transplanting Samkarsana in Rohini. On the same night a boy was born to Devaki and a daughter to Yasoda simultaneously. The boy is well-known as Krisna, an incarnation of Visnu and the daughter is no other than goddess Nidra. Various super natural events took place at the time of Krisna's birth. Sages with Gandharvas and Apsaras reached there and began to chant the hymns of praise of Madhusudana.

Vasudeva took over the child-Krisna immediately for fear of Kamsa and entered into the abode of Yasoda.

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1. In order to justify the name of Samkarasana the HV states—

> karsanen asya garbhasya svagarbe c ahitasya vai
> Samkarsano nama subhe tava putro bhavisyati.
>
> HV. 48.6

As the embryo was taken out from Devaki's womb and transplanted in the womb of Rohini, it may be compared with the transplanation of the modern test-tube-baby. Hence the child was known as Samkarsana.

There he placed the child by her side, brought back her daughter to Devaki. This exchange of the babies was carried out hurriedly when Yasoda was fast asleep. As promised earlier, then Vasudeva intimated the birth of the child to Kamsa, who came running to the room with his followers for the child. Devaki entreated him to spare the child as it was a daughter; but without caring for the request he took the baby-girl by her left feet and thrashed on a slab of stone in great fury. The girl slipped from his hand and turned into a goddess. Decorated with divine garland and smeared with sandal paste she went up to the sky. She had four arms, her lustre was like lightning and her dress was blue and yellow. In a state of fury she laughed at Kamsa and informed him that she would suck his blood when killed by his enemy. Accompanied by her associates the goddess entered heaven.

When Kamsa was convinced of the goddess's role, he expressed regret before Devaki for killing her babies. As time (Kala) is the enemy of mankind and consumes one and all, he attributed the cause of the death of her babies to it. Confessing his misdeeds, he fell prostrate before her. Devaki in her turn also tried to pacify Kamsa by saying that death is inevitable to one and all, and the death-god Yama is the cause of ruin of her babies. Hearing these conciliatory words of Devaki, Kamsa, deeply grieved at heart, went to his abode.

(b) *Visnu Purana 5.3-4; Bhagavata Purana 10.1.55-4.1-28; cf. Brahma Purana 182.*

In the versions of the Vi. P. and the Bh. P. one can mark the elaboration and addition of the above myth. While the Vi. P. begins with the conception of Krisna,

the Bh. P. adds, convinced of the veracity of Vasudeva's statement Kamsa desisted from killing Devaki. Vasudeva and Devaki reached home. When the first-born son was born to Devaki, Vasudeva handed it over to Kamsa, who was pleased with Vasudeva and returned the child as it was not the cause of his death. Vasudeva returned home with the baby, but could not rejoice over this as Kamsa was well-known as a wicked one of uncontrolled mind. After this incident Narada appeared in the scene. He communicated to Kamsa that the cowherds of Vraja including Nanda and the Vrsnis led by Vasudeva were the parts of the gods themselves. He apprised the endeavours of Brahma and other gods for the annihilation of the Daityas. After Narada's departure Kamsa bound Devaki and Vasudeva in his residence with fetters and did to death each son of the couple. Even Kamsa went to the extent of entering into hostilities with the Yadus, put his father Ugrasena, the Bhojas and Andhakas in prison for his safety. Oppressed by the allies of Kamsa, Yadus fled for life and took refuge in the territories of Kurus, Pancalas, Kekayas etc. After Kamsa killed six sons of Devaki, lord Ananta, a ray of Visnu entered the womb of Devaki as her seventh child. In due time Yogamaya (Nidra in HV) transferred the embryo from Devaki's womb to Rohini.

As to the descent of Visnu on earth the Vi. P. and the Bh. P. versions run parallel. Due to lord's presence various auspicious signs and symbols appeared on earth. Then the Bh. P. introduces the contemplation of Kamsa for destroying his enemy. He thought of killing Devaki who was carrying Hari, in her womb, his enemy but he refrained from such heinous crime for fear of public censure and of falling to hell, But his mind

was so much occupied with the fear of Visnu that while sitting, lying down, standing taking his food or walking on earth, he began to visualise the world full of him (Visnu).

asinah samvisamstisthan bhunjanah paryatan mahim
cintayano Hrsikesam apasyat tanmayam jagat,

Bh. P. 10.2.24

During the presence of the lord in the womb of Devaki, Brahma, Siva and other gods headed by Narada went on glorifying the Lord. This praise is shorter in the Vi. P. (5.2.7-21) but the Bh. P. (10.2.25-42) makes it elaborate and colourful. After such glorification, the gods return to their abode.

On the day of Lord's birth, ocean produced melodious music, Gandharvas and Apsaras of heaven danced with joy, the gods showered flowers on earth, holy fires glowed with mild and gentle flame. At midnight when the cloud emitted low pleasing sounds and poured down rain of flowers, Janardana was born with the complexion of lotus leaf. He had four arms carrying Samkha, Cakra and Gada. Beholding the lord in such form, Vasudeva appealed him to withold his celestial form for Kamsa would assuredly put him to death, when he would know that. Thereafter the Lord said that in their former life, they prayed Visnu to be their progeny. In fulfiment of their prayer, he is born as their son. Thus saying the Lord assumed the form of an ordinary child (Vi. P. 5. 3.1-14). But the Bh. P. (10. 3. 1-45) makes it more elaborate. Here the divine child was clad in yellow robe with Kaustubha gem shining on his breast. His locks of hair bathed in the splendour of his diadem and ear-ring studded with an exquisite girdle, armlets and

bangles etc. Vasudeva beheld such form of the child in the laying-in-chamber. Overwhelmed with joy he mentally gave away ten thousand cows to Brahmanas in his hurry to celebrate the descent of Sri Krisna. With folded palms and bent-body Vasudeva proceeded to glorify the lord. Devaki perceived the child endowed with the characteristics of Lord Visnu and began to glorify him with praises and prayers. Then the lord said, in the Svayambhuva Manvantara, Devaki was born Prsni and Vasudeva as Prajapati-Sutapa. Commanded by Brahma, both of them practised most rigid austerities for a pretty long time for begetting progeny. When Visnu appeared before them, they asked for progeny like him. In subsequent birth she was born as Aditi and Vasudeva as Kasyapa and were blessed with Upendra and Vamana (incarnations of Visnu) as their sons. As desired by them he assumed the form of a human baby. Due to their meditation on him as their son and Brahma, they would attain the highest state of union with him—

yuvam mam putrabhavena Brahmabhavena c asakrt
cintayantau krtasnehau yasyethe madgatim param
Bh. P. 10.3.45

Thus saying Hari became silent and instantly assumed the form of an ordinary child before Devaki and Vasudeva.

Taking the baby Vasudeva went out that same night. He faced no obstructions on the way as the guards and warders of Mathura were all charmed by yoganidra. When Vasudeva moved in the rain with the baby, Sesa, the many-headed serpent followed him spreading his hoods above their heads. The turbulent river Yamuna was stilled and did not rise above

Vasudeva's knee. On the other side of the river he saw Nanda-Gopa with his followers carrying tributes to Kamsa, who could not behold him. Yasoda was under the spell of Yoganidra, whom she gave birth as her daughter. Vasudeva approached her (Yasoda), took up the girl placing his son in her stead, returned home quickly and placed the girl beside Devaki. When Yasoda awoke, she found the boy she had delivered as black as the leaf of lotus and was delighted at heart (Vi. P. 5. 3. 15-23). But the Bh. P. (10. 3. 46-53) tries to add thus: when Vasudeva desired to shift the child, he found his fetters loosened, the gate-keepers and the citizens of Mathura asleep and doors flew open by themselves. Clouds rained in gentle rumbling to avert the popular gaze Sesa followed at the heels of Vasudeva warding off the rain by means of his hools spreading as an umbrella over his head. Though the river Yamuna was in deep flood, she afforded passage to lord Krsna by becoming fordable. Thus the cooperation of the rain-god Indra, Sesa and the river Yamuna is marked. While the Vi. P. version records that Vasudeva meet Nanda on the way, the Bh. P. states that the cowherds headed by Nanda were fast asleep in their houses at that time. After the exchange of children, Vasudeva laid the divine girl on Devaki's bed and stood confined as before by putting the chains about his feet. The gates were closed as before. Yasoda, simply came to know of a child being born to her, but did not notice its sex, as she was exhausted due to the throes of parturition and the influence of Yogamaya.

The guards were awakened at the cry of the new-born-baby and immediately communicated the message to Kamsa. In an instant Kamsa ran to the spot, without caring for Devaki's entreaties seized the child and threw

it ruthlessly against a stone. But to his utter surprise the child rose up into the sky and expanded into a gigantic figure having eight arms, each wielding some formidable weapons. Then she informed Kamsa that it was useless to hure her down for his life but his real adversary, who is the mightiest amongst gods and formerly his destroyer, was born to kill him. Advising to secure him (Krisna) for his (Kamsa's) welfare, the goddess decorated with heavenly perfumes and garlands and hymned by the Siddhas vanished (Vi. P. .3 2.-29). The Bh P. (10.4. 1 13) tries to magnify certain part of the same story : Devaki's appeal for sparing the life of the girl appears very appealing. The weapons held in various arms of the goddess is enumerated. She held such weapons like a bow, a pike, an arrow, a shield, a sword, a conch and a mace in her eight hands. The goddess asked Kamsa not to kill such helpless children, for his real enemy was born elsewhere. Thus saying though disappeared she continued on earth as diety under diverse appellations in shrines of different names.

Thus warned by the goddess, Kamsa was troubled at heart and summoned his principal Asuras like Pralamba, Kesin, Dhenuka, Arista etc. He directed them to punish those who are liberal to the gods and Brahmins. He instructed them to search for such young children who have unusual vigour and put them to death without remorse, so that his enemy, who is well-known to be born elsewhere, would be wiped out. Commanding thus Kamsa retired to his palace. Begging excuse for his misdeed of slaying all their children, he liberated Devaki and Vasudeva from captivity. Kamsa allowed them happy life and withdrew into the inner apartment of his palace (Vi. P. 5.4). In addition to this the Bh. P. (10.4. 14-46) appends a confession of guilt by Kamsa. Being

remorsed of his misdeeds Kamsa clasped the feet of Vasudeva and Devaki to forget and forgive :

ksamadhvam mama dauratmyam sadhavo dinavatsalah
ityuktvasrumukhah padau syalah svasrorathagrahit
Bh. P. 10.4.23

Devaki vouchsafed forgiveness to her causin for his repentance. Vasudeva also impressed upon Kamsa that infatuation breeds the distinction that, "this is mine, that is mine". Overpowered with such ignorance one finds t difficult to perceive god. Then Devaki and Vasudeva were permitted to leave for their abode and Kamsa retired to his palace.

The instructions to his followers stated in the Vi. P. version is included differently in the Bh. P. only after Devaki and Vasudeva were released. After that night he summoned his counsellors and intimated the version of Yogamaya. The actions suggested by Kamsa in the Vi. P. is related through his counsellors here (Bh. P. 10.4.31-42) and appears to be very exhaustive. By the way of stating the sad plight of the gods due to the demons, they suggested that Visnu was the sole support of the gods. The Veda, the Cow, the Brahmin, Rsis and the institutions of sacrifice constitute the root of Visnu. He is the ruler of the gods and the enemy of the demons. So the most effective means of killing Visnu is to kill the Brahmin, the Cow, the sages etc. Thus being convinced Kamsa thought of the massacre of Brahmins etc. as conducive to his good. Directing the demons for prosecuting the righteous etc. in all quarters Kamsa retired to his palace. Thus ends the story.

CONCLUSION

The episode of Krisna's birth is related in the above texts. Further elaboration of the story is also traced in the Brahmavaivarta Purana, In the above narrations the main motif appears to be the descent of Visnu on earth for the annihilation of the wicked. protection of the virtuous and the maintenance of social order. From among these texts, the HV speaks of his full incarnation or complete descent. It is said that Visnu takes the birth of Krisna in the family of Vasudeva living his old body on the mount Meru—

puranam tatra vinyasya deham Harir udaradhih
atmanam yojayamasa Vasudevagrhe prabhuh

HV. 45. 49.

That Krisna is the full form of Vaisnavite valour (*Vaisnavakjas*) is well-marked by the author of the HV (62.16). When we turn to the Vi. P, we find that Krisna is born as a part of Visnu (*Visnr amsamsa sambhuti* Vi. P. 5.1.4a). On the other hand the Bh. P. shows the happy blending of Vaisnavism with devotion. Here one can notice the tendency of identifying all things with Visnu. And it does not fail to recognize the old tradition of the Vi. P. and enumerates Krisna among the twenty two Avataras of Visnu. In subsequent stage of development the dichotomy has very nicely been solved. There are redactor very emphatically states, the other Avataras of Visnu are either part manifestations or rays of the Supreme Person, but *Sri Krsna* is the Lord Himself :

ete c amsakalah pumsah Krsnas tu bhagavan svayam

(Bh. P. 1.3 28a)

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ASSAMESE VERSIONS OF *THE BHAGAVATA*

Ramesh Pathak

The place that has been occupying by *the Bhagavata* n the religious and cultural life of Assam may be termed as unique and second to none. Though the Assamese language can rightly boast of translating the Ramayana into Modern Indian language much before the other languages did (Assamese Ramayana was translated by Madhava Kandali, a poet of 14th century) and though the episodes of the Mahabharata are also popular (15/16th century) yet these two great epics have never enjoyed the place of *the Bhagavata.*

There is a historical reason of it. The all embracing impact of the Mahapurusiya dharma, popularly known as Ekasaraha dharma or Bhagavati dharma, preached by the great saint of Assam Sri Sankaradeva (1449-1568) is so deep-rooted in the socio-cultural life of Assam still today that no other book can enjoy that special veneration and status. Sankaradeva's religion was based on *the Bhagavata* which he described as the Sun amidst the puranas (Purana Surya Mahabhagavata Vedantaro ito parama tattva.) As the religion is based on bhakti-cult there is no place for 'jnana-marga' and probably due to this reason the place of the Gita also is not at par with *the Bhagavata.*

For a Mahapurusiya, the worship of other gods and goddesses is strictly forbidden. Sankardeva gave this

stricture in a clear language—a Vaisnava should not worship any other god except Sri Krishna, he should not enter any other god's temple, nor should he partake of the offerings made to any other god. In so doing bhakti would be vitiated (translated by Dr. B. Kakati—*The Mother Goddess Kamakhya*). There is no idol worship in this religion and a copy of *the Bhagavata* is placed at the altar as deity and even initiation is done keeping a copy of *the Bhagavata* in front of the person to be initiated. But unlike the Granth-Sahib of the Sikhs, the 'puthi' or the thapana need not be worshipped with formalities. (T. N. Sarma)

The daily recitation of *the Bhagavata* in the 'Sattras' (Vaisnavite monasteries) and in the 'Nama-gharas' (village prayer hall) was compulsory and for this purpose, there was either a 'bhagavati' or a 'pathaka' in such institutions.

The term '*Bhagavata*' in Assamese covers a vast range of literature-from poetry to drama. In the long history of the Assamese literature, *the Bhagavata* is working as a constant and inexhaustible source. These can be discussed in two major subheads :

a) translation : i) poetry
ii) prose

and b) adaptions : poetry, drama, essays etc.

The rendering of *the Bhagavata* marks an era of renaissance in Assamese poetry; its literary influence on sankarite literature was manifold and immense and proved a shaping force upon Sankara's writings. Sankaradeva was not only indebted to *the Bhagavata* for its Krisnite legends but also for literary forms, expressions and idioms. (Dr. B. K.

Barua). Besides the original translation, Sankaradeva composed a large number of independant books with materials from *the Bhagavata*. His 'Nimi-Navasiddha Sambad' (book XI), 'Bhakti-Pradip' (Book xi) Anadipatana (Book III), Graha-gajendra Yuddha (Book VIII), Amrita-Manthana (Book VIII) and Bali chalana (Book VIII) are based on *the Bhagavata*. Sankaradeva's 'Kirtana' which is regarded as high as *the Bhagavata* in the Vaisnavite circle, contains 27 episodes taken from *the Bhagavata*, namely from book VI, VII, VIII and X. It is looked upon with the same religious feeling and reverence as Rama-Carita Manasa of Tulsidasa in Northern India. There is no Assamese Hindu home which does not possess a copy of 'Kirtana'........., no house which does not recite some of its verses on religious occasions and during illness. (Dr. B. K. Barua). In the 'Rukmini-Harana Kavya' he took the story from Hari Vamsa and added to it some episodes from *the Bhagavata*. He declares—

eke Hari Vamsa katha amrita sakshata,
aru *Bhagavata* katha misra dilo tata.
dui katha padabandhe rakhicho milai,
yena madhu misra dugdhe ati svada pai.

Sankaradeva's contemporary and desciple Madhava-deva wrote Rajasuya epic basing on book X. His 'Nama-Ghosa', another most respected book in the Vaisnavite circle, contains one thousand padas and most of them are taken from *the Bhagavata*.

In the limited time of a Seminar, it is not possible to cover all the aspects, let alone the various books. But I can not resist myself from describing the prose renderings of Bhattadeva which he started In 1593 and completed in 1597 A. D. According to his biography of his guru, Damodaradeva

instructed him to render the text of the *Bhagavata* into Assamese prose so that even the sudras and women could understand the sacred texts. (Stri sudra sarvaloke bujhe yena mata). But his prose renderings was so condensed and the language was so scholarly that, we fear, betrayed the ideal. But according to his biographers Bhattadeva succeeded in his mission—"Stri sudra sisu samaste bujhaya parhante nahi dusana." Katha-*Bhagavata* is the product of the one single writer, as such its treatment is more scientific. (Dr. S. N. Sarma).

Now let us come to our main discussion the complete *Bhagavata* in Assamese. The translation of the entire text was not a light job for one man, if we take into account the responsiblity which was shouldered by Sankaradeva. So taking the major portion with him (book I, II, III, VII, VIII, IX, X, and XII) he allotted different section to different persons. Let us be acquinted with the writers first. In rendering the *Bhagavata* into Assamese Sankaradeva was the source of infinite inspiration. Ananta Kandali was directly commissioned by Sankaradeva and Govinda Carana Dvija also expressed his indebtedness to him. Whether Gopalacarana was a desciple of Sankaradeva or of Damodaradeva is still an open question but the writer spoke highly of the great reformer. The following are bookwise information—

Book I and II : Sankaradeva

Book III : Gopalacarana Dvija

Book IV : This book was translated by four poets. Jayarama translated the geneology of the deughters of Manu, the sacrific of Daksa, stories of Dhruva, Venu and prithu. The story of Dhruva was also translated by Visnubharati. The allegorical story of king

Puranjana was translated by Ratnakara Mishra. The translator of the last seven chapter of the book was Aniruddha.

Book V	: Aniruddha Kayastha
Book VI	: Sankaradeva and Ananta Ksndali
Book VII	: Kesava Kaystha
Book VIII	: Sankaradeva, Gopalcarana Dvija and Kesava Kayastha
Book IX	: Kesava kayastha
Book X	: Sankaradeva and Ananta Kandali
Book XI, XII	: Sankaradeva

Deviations from the original Bhagavata :

We have already pointed out that the purpose of Vaisnavite literatures of Assam was to propagate the ideals of the *Bhagavata* based on Bhakti cult and for that matter the portions which were considered to be unnecessary were either dropped or summerised. "Sankaradeva was a scholar a poet and a reformer all in one. In his translation of the different books of the *Bhagavata* he has adopted a method of omission and selection. Some topics have been totally left out, others have been summerised and still others have been summerised and still others have been elucidated." (Dr. S. N. Sarma). He translated the *Bhagavata* not only into Assamese words but into Assamese idioms. It's expression is so idiomatic and lucid that the translated work may be equalled to original style. For example, compare the following—

Original :

Evam sa bhagavana Krsna Vrudavanacarah. Kvacit
Yayau Ramamrte rajan Kalindim Sakhibhivrtah

Atha gavasca nidaghatapa piditah
dustam jalam papustasy str saratta Visadusitam
10/15/47-48

translation :

Dineka Govindadeva baleka lagata nalai
apuni melita save gai
Gopa sisu sava samo yamunara tire tire
dhenugana phuranta carai
jestha masara ghora roudre pidileka ati
eko ara tra sata najani
kalira hradara nami nirantare garu gopa
Paraimane pile visapani

Sankaradeva described 'nidaghapiditah' as 'jesthsmasara ghora roudre pidileka' as the Assamese people are well experienced of the heat of the jesthamasa. In some cases he has deviated from the original to make the matter more homely than the above mentioned method of replacement. For example :—

Original :

Kirata Hunadhra pulinda Pukkasa Abhira
Karika yavanakhasadayah
Ye anye sa papa yadupasrayah sudhanti
tasmai prabhavisnava namah
2/4/18

Sankaradeva has replaced the names of the unfamiliar tribes for the Assamese readers and included the names of some local tribes, e. g.

Kirata Kachari Khasi Garo Miri
Yavana Karika Goala

Acama muluka Rajaka Turuka
Kuvaca Mlecha candala
Ano papi nara krsna sevakara
sangata pavitra hay
Bhakti labhiya samsara tariya
Vaikunthe sukhe calay

Instead of word to word translation Sankaradeva interpreted *the Bhagavata* in his own style. He intepreted according to Sridhara Svami's 'tika-bhasya'. The same method was applied by the other writers also. Let us now examine them one by one.

Book I : In original there are 19 chapters. In the first three Slokas the importance of *Bhagavata* has been explained. Sankaradeva has dropped these. The 3rd, 4th, 5th, 13th, 14th and 15th chapters are also summarised. On the'otherhand, the topics which were dealing the Vaisnavite ideals were elucidated. The descriptions of the different 'Avataras' of the chapter III omitted and instead of it Sankaradeva described the qualities of Sri Krisna in a short but lucid manner.

Book II : In original there are ten chapters. The first chapter containing the description of the 'Virata Purusa' and the second chapter containing the elevation of the yogis have been practically dropped in the sense that Sankaradeva summarised these into twelve padas only. The chapter containing the 'upadesa' (advice) has been elucidated.

Book III : The first four chapters of this book have been summarised by the poet. He has expressed the reason thus :

amara bandhava bandhu srimanta sankara
Karilanta pada teho cari adhyara

Sito bacanaka mai mane adarilo
eteke isvara katha samkshepe Kahilo

(I have shortened these four chapters as Sankaradeva has written seperate books dealing these topics.)

Book V : The number of chapters has been reduced to 23 from 26 of the original. The first twenty chapters though shortened yet the poet did not miss the necessary points. But the description of the 21 to 24th has been summerised to only one chapter and the 26th chapter containing the description of the hell is omitted. H. N. Dutta Barua, the compiler of the Assamese *Bhagavata* says that as Sankaradeva incorporated these in his 'Ajamilopakhyana', Aniraddha felt it unnecessary to re-translate it.

Book VI : Out of 19 chapters of Book VI, the translation of fourteen chapters so far discovered. We have not found the Assamese versions of 4th, 5th, 6th, 18th and 19th chapters "(Dutta Barua). But the two important episodes, namely stories of Ajamila and Vrttasura were translated by Sankaradeva and Ananta Kandaly respectively for entirely different purpose.

Book VI : All the original chapters are retained in the Assamese versions ina summerised manner. The philosophical partof the first chapter is omitted. The chapters 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 have been condensed.

Book IX : The poet concluded the book declaring that he has completed it in a very short manner (Samksep kariya sava, navama skandhara katha, samapati bhaileka niscya). But in another place he has conferred that some episodes from other puranas also included to elaborate the matterano

purana katha kichu dilo ninindiba moka cai/kathar prastava yena laye mane, nibandhibo thai thai.

Propably due to this he added some episodes from Markandeya Purana while depicting the story of king Haricandra.

Book X : There are 90 chapters in the original. The Assamese poets have divided it into three parts-adi dasama, madhya-dasama and sesa-dasama.

The Adi-dasama hes been translated by Sankaradeva. As elsewhere, Sankaradeva has condensed the original descriptions. For example, according to original Krisna placed Bolarama from the womb of Daivaki into Rohini through the help of Yogamaya and himself entered into Daivaki's womb. This has been described from 5th to 9th 'S' lokas' of chapter II thus—

Saptamo Vaisnavam dhama yamantam pracakshate
garbho bhbhuva Devakya harsa sokabivardhanah
Bhagavanapi Visvatma viditva Kamsajam bhayam
Yadunam nijanathanam yogamaya samadisat
gaccha devi brajam bhadre gopa-gobhiralam krtam
Rohini Vasudevasya bharyaste Nanda-gokule
anyasca kamsa samvigna vivaresu vasanti hi
Devakya Jathare garbham sesakhyam dhama mamakam
tat sannikrisya Rohinya udare sannivesaya
athahamamsabhagena Devakya putratam subhe
prapsyami Yasodayam tvam Nandapatnyam bhavisyasi

Sankaradeva has shortened the five 'S' lokas' into less than three slokas in Assamese

Pace chaya putra yeve kruda Kamsamarileka
dunai Daivakira garbha bhaila

Parama Vaisnava teja Yahara ananta nama
amse udarata basa laila
hena dekhi narayana adesa karita pace
Mahamaya Gokulaka yaha
Daivakira garbhu hari Rohinita thayoniya
Yasodata tumi upajaha
amiyo sakshate gaiya Daivakita upajibo
Vasudeva anibe palaya

On the otherhand, the 26th and 27th sloka of the chapter two have been extended e. g.

Original :

Satyavratam styamparam trisatyam satyasya
Yonim nihitance satye
Satyasya satyanritasatyanetram satyatmakam
tvam saranam prapannah
ekayanohasau dviphala strimulascaturasaha
pancavidhah saratma
Saptatvagastavitapo navakso dasaccadi
dvikhago hyadivrksaha

Assamese version

Tumi Satyavrata moksara sadhana
Sarvakale thaka svami
maha pancabhuta tomata upajai
tumi sava antaryami
Sristira antata tumi matra thaka
Samataka pravartai
tomara carane pasilo sarane
tumi bina gati nai
prakriti asraye achai adi briksa
Sukha dukha dui phala

tini guna mula artha cari rasa
sipaye indriya bala
chaya urmi atma sata dhatu cala
Sakhaye asta prakriti
dasa vayu pata isa jiva duti
pakshi thakai ata niti

From 48th chapter to 81st chapter of the original is regarded in Assamese as madhya—dasama and this portion is translated by Ananta Kandali. The story of Revatis' marriage to Balarama does not fall in this book but in book IX in the original. In Assamese, this episode is described in this book. It is observed, Ananta Kandali deviated more from the origin than Sankaradeva.

Book XI : This book contains 31 chapters of which Sankaradeva practically omitted the chapters 8, 9, 14-28 as the philosophical discussions between Krisna and Uddhava was consi dered by him as unnecessary to his bhakti cult... "On the otherhand there are certain matters in the Assamese version which we do not find in the Sanskrit original. The Sanskrit version of Book XI concludes with the death of Krisna and the subsequent events regarding his wives and parents are not related there. The Assamese version relates in detail the grief of Arjuna when he comes to rescue from the flood affected city of Dvaraka the old and infirm men and women, the death rites performed by the wives of the Yadavas at Prabhasa the forcible abduction of the wives of Krisna by the uncivilised cowherds from the protection of Arjuna... the meeting of Uddhava and Vidura on the bauks of Yamuna...etc. These subsequent events are taken from book 1/13 and 111/1-5 and have been incorporated here to give a complete history of the Yadavas and their relatives."

(Dr. S. N. Sarma. Also see the preface of *the Bhagavata* by H. N. Duttabarua).

Conclusion :

So far we have discussed the differert books of the Pada-*Bhagavata*, the different writers, the deviations and the nature of deviations. From the above discussion one thing emerges that the translation of *the Bhagavata* was taken with a definite purpose and the episodes which were not directly related to that aim were either dropped or summarised. But the episodes which were considered as essential to spread the ideal were elucidated. The rendering of *the Bhagavata* marks an era of renaissance in Assamese poetry; its literary influence on Sankaritic literature was manifold and immense and proved a shaping force upon Sankara's writings. Sankaradeva was not only indebted to *the Bhagavata* for its Krisnite legends but also for literary forms, expressions and traditions." (Dr. B. K. Barua).

Sankaradeva and his contemporary poets had to work under certain limitations. In those days Sanskrit scriptures were considered as sacred and the attempt to translate them into a regional language was looked down as sin. Sankaradeva himself had to face the king for such an "act of sin". When translation itself was considered to be anti religious, you can imagine the consequence if the poets deviated from original. Even for omission and commission they had to apologise Jiba kichu barha dekha ito a paradh era vyaso denta kathata ranjana—if you find anything elucidated, please pardon me even vysa did such a thing and 'Jebe tika bhasya cai dekha ito katha nai ninda tebe kariba emak— f

you do not find these in the text or commentaries then only blame me. Naturally such restrictions were there. Luckily the translators of the Assamese *Bhagavata* proved their poetic genius within these limitations.



BHAGAVATA AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Heramba Chatterjee Sastri

Before we initiate our discussion on the contribution of the *Srimadbhagavata* towards national integration, it is deemed convenient to see for ourselves what the text itself proclaims. In the first instance it has been claimed that the *Bhagavata* contains the quintessence of the doctrines enshrined in the Srutis, the fountainhead of all in philosophy and religion in India :

Vedopanisadam saraj jata bhagavati katha. II. 67.

More than once this text declares that one of the purposes of composition of this text is to bring back to the track the persons who have any how deviated from the path of Bhakti (devotion) and Jnana (knowledge) :

idam bhagavatam nama puranam brahmasammitam
bhakti jnanaviraganam sthapanaya prakasitam II. 71

It claims itself even superior to the Upanisads :

nigamakalpataror galitam phalam sukamukhad
amrtadravasamgutam
pibata bhagavatam rasamalayam muhur aho rasika
bhuvi bhavukah 1. 1. 3

Srijiva Gosvami speaks of the *Bhagavata* as the very representative of lord Krsna himself : Srikrsna-pratinidhi-svarupam evedam. (*Tattvasandarbha*, p. 19.). Rasa in the

Bhagavata is of the nature of love unto the Deity, which is always of the nature of bliss and pleasure and this accounts for the reason that even the liberated ones find pleasure to have a taste of it. Sridhara in his commentary on the *Bhagavata* gives expression to this feeling thus :

Na hidam svargadisukhavan muktair upeksyate
kim tu sevyate eva.

The *Bhakti* that has been emphasised in the *Bhagavata* is declared to the competent to do away with worldly agony as also the illusion :

Anarthopasamam saksad bhaktiyogam adhoksaje
lokasyajanata vidv-ams cakre satvatasamhitam
yasyam vai sruyamanayam krsne paramapuruse
bhaktir utpadyate pumsah sekamohabhayapaha 1. 7. 6-7

Once this type of devotion is generated the egoistic feelings disappear, all sorts of doubt are wiped off and the effects of all the acts perpetrated come to an end :

Bhidyate hrdayagrantis chidyante sarvasamsayah
ksiyante casya karmani drsta evatmanisvare 1. 2. 21

The superiority of Bhakti to mere knowledge has been spoken of in eulogistic terms in the *Bhagavata* thus :

sreyahsrtim bhaktim udasya te vibho
klisyanti ye kevalabodhalabdhaye
tesam asau klesala eva sisyate
nanyad yatha sthulatusavaghatinam X. 14. 4

In a very interesting way the *Bhagavata* presents Bhakti with the unique feature that by taking to any means whatsoever the mind is to be concentrated on the Deity

(here Krsna) : tasmat kenapy upayena manah krsne nivesayet. VII. 1. 32.

Accordingly in the commentary called *Kaivalyadipika* on the *Muktaphala* attributed to Hemadri, Vopadeva defines Bhakti as :

upayapurvakam bhagavati manahsthirikaranam bhaktih.

It is in the *Bhagavata* that a novel approach has been made to the nature of Bhakti. It has been held that one may have Bhakti unto the supreme spirit even if the spirit is craved for with hostile feeling. In that respect Kamsa, Sisupala and others who were antagenistic to Krsna were devotees of the Lord in the same sense in which the cowherd maidens were :

kamad dvesad bhayat snchad yatha bhaktyesvare manah
avesya tadagham hitva bahavas tadgatim gatah
gopyah kamad bhayat kamse dvesac caidyadayo nrpah
sambandhad vrsnayah snehad yuyam bhaktya vayam vibho
VII. 1. 30-31

The *Bhagavata,* in fact, lays stress on the aspect that the feeling of antagonism which makes the antagonist think constantly of the opponent, is much more deep and superior to that of love and devotion. Such a feeling may cause the attainment of the bliss and grace of the Lord earlier than what could have been done through direct reverence and devotion :

Yatha vairanubandhena martyas tanmayatam iyat
na tatha bhaktiyogena iti me niscita matih
kitah pesaskrta ruddhah kudayam tam anusmaran
samrambhabhayayogena vindate tatsvaruptatam

evam krsne bhagavati mayamanuja isvare
vairena putapapmanas tam apur anucintaya VII. 1.27-29

It is the *Bhagavata* that boldly proclaims that the Lord adopts different *Lilas* in this world just to please his devotees :

Prapancam nisprapance'smin vidambayasi bhutale
prapannajanatanandasandoham prathitum prabhe
X. 14. 37

Thus it may be stated that in this *Bhagavata* Bhakti has been accorded a new dimension in the form of recognising it not merely as a practising expedient (*sadhananga*), but as a purely mental human feeling (*antaravrtti*) in the form of love, affection, friendship, servitude and the like Bhakti here has been given a stamp of attachment (ragatmika) and is of spontaneous nature and is given expression in the felling of the devotee who behaves in the outburst of heart in any way he likes :

Evamvratah svapriyanamakirtya jatanurage
drutacitta uccaih
hasaty atha roditi rauti gayaty unmadvan
nrtyati lokabahyah 11. 2. 40

In that state there is no feeling or attachment but for the Deity itself, as expressed in the *Bhagavata* :

Vasudevapram jnanam vasudevaparam tapah
vasudevapare dharme vasudevapara gatih 1 2. 28

This feeling of the devotee partakes of the characteristics of *Rasa* as rightly pointed out Rupagosvami in his *Bhaktirasamrtasindhu* :

Vyatitya bhavanavartma yas camat karasarabhuh
hrdi svatvojjvale vadham svadate sa rase matah
II. 5. 132

Such *Bhakti-rasa* assumes 12 forms or types in the formed santa, dasya, sakhya, vatsala, madhura, karuna, hasya, raudra, vira, bhayanaka, adbhuta and Vibhatsa, of which the first five are principal (mukhya) while the rest seven are subordinate (gauna). Here in the *Bhagavata*, unique of its kind, the twelve Rasa have been explained in terms of Krsna in a single verse, which deserve special mention here :

Maklanam asanir (raudra) nrnam naravarah (adbhuta)
strinam smore murtiman (srngara)
Gopanam svajano (sakhya) satam ksitibhujam sasta
(vira) svapitroh sisuh (Vatsalya)
Mrtyur bhojapater (bhayanaka) viradavidusam (Vibhatsa)
tattvam param yoginam
Vrsninam paradevateti vidito (santa and Dasya) rangam
gate sagrajah X. 43. 17.

In delineation of Rasa the *Bhagavata* expresses in favour of the devotee's craving for Krsna's activities in his Naralila rather for his supranormal glory. This point has been clarified Visvanath Chakravarti in his text—*Ragavartmacandrika* (p. 24) :

Madhuryam khalu tad eva yad aisvaryavinabhuta-kevala-naralilatvena maugdhyam.

This is evident from the feeling of Yasoda who was simply everwhelmed for a moment at the sight of his celestial universal form, but who at the very next moment

was surcharged with the feeling of maternal love-(*vatsalya*). In the interpretation of Visvanath in his commentary to *the Bhagavata*, she forgot the supernatural form of Krsna as one forgets what he sees in a dream :

Yatha svapnadrsto 'rthah kas' cit vismaryate tathaiva sadya eva sa visvadarsanadikam vismasara.

Forgetting the glamourous form of the Lord she could only think of Him as her affectionate son :

Sadyo nastasmrtir gopi saropyaroham almajam
pravrddhasnehakalilahrdyasit yatha pura
trayya copanisadbhis ca samkhyayogais ca sattvataih
upagiyamanamahatmyam harim samanyatatmajam
X. 8. 44-45

The cowherd maids happened to be the most fortunate ones to enjoy the ethereal pleasure of Bhakti, who not caring for the social norms and bindings surrendered themselves unconditionally at the feet of the Lord.

asam aho caranarenujusam aham syam
Vrndavane kim api gulmalatausadhinam
ya dustyajam svajanamaryapatham ca hitva
bhejur mukundapadavim srutibhir vimrgyam X. 47. 61

How thrilling and fascinating is the fact that Krsna himself expresses in unequivocal terms that he would not in life be in a position to pay off the debt of the cowherd-maids who sacrificed everything on his account :

Na paraye'ham niravadyasamyujam
svasadhukrtyam vibudhayusapi vah

ya mabhajan durjaragehasrnkhala h
samvrscya tad vah pratiyatuh sadhuna XII. 32. 21.

In this context, It may be permitted to state that Sri Jiva gosvami in his *Pritisandarbha* has made it abundantly clear that the Rasa that is generated in respect of Bhakti unto the Deity (Krsna) is thousand times superior to the Rasa that is generated in the normal secular sphere :

Laukikasya ratyadeh sukharupatvam yathakathancid eva vastuvicare duhkha-paryavasayitat. Pritisandarbha, p. 763

Bhagavatpritau tu sthayibhavatavam tadvidhasesa sukhatarangarnavabrahmasukhad adhikatamatvan ca pratipa-ditam eva. Pritisandarbha, p. 763.

Following *Bhagavata* therefore, (II. 1. 5) it is wise to utter here

Tasmad bharata sarvatma bhagavan isvare harih
sretavyah kirtitavyas ca smartavyas cecchatabhayam

. Caitanya-mahaprabhu in his *Siksastaka* eulogises the good effects of *Namasankirtana* thus :

Eetodarpanamerjanam bhava-mahadavagninirvapanam
sreyahkairavacandrika vitaranam vidyavadhujivanam
Anandambudhivardhanam pratipdam purnamrtasvadanam
sarvatmasnapanam param vijayate Srikrsnasamkrtanam

Let us pray by following this :

Na dhanam na janam kavitasundarim va jagadisa kamaye
Mama janmajanmanisvara bhavatat bhaktir ahaituki tvayi

The Bhagavati lila of the Lord may be best representa-tion of Srigauranga two in one—ardhanarisvara—the devotee

and the object of devotion, concept unparalleled in the religious history of the world :

Sriradhayah pranayamahima kidrso vanayaiva svadyo yenadbhutamadhurima kidrso va madiya saukhyam casya madanubhavatah kidrso veti lobhat

tadbhavadhyah samajani sacigarbhasindhau harinduh

(Svarupa gosvamis Karca, mentioned in the Caitanyacaritamrta, p. 21.)

Further,

Radhakrsnapranayavikrtir hladinisaktir asmad
ekatmanav api bhuvi pura dehabhedam gatau tau
Caitanyakhyam prakatam adhuna taddvayam caikyam aptam
radhabhavadyutisubalitam naumi krsnasvarupam (Ibid)

While keeping in view the subject matter of our discussion here with reference to the national integration, it is being attempted here to emphasise that Bhakti whatever complicated its Sastrie nature may be, is to be looked at as the most convenient method of pursuing the spirit through devotion, in respect of the common man, as against the method adopted by the opulent section of the society by buying off the gods through sacrifices demanding huge expense; as also against the method of culture and knowledge which only may be taken to by a few specially gifted ones and there also by constant culture. The struggling individual at its moment of psychological erisis, feeling the burden and mystery of the world, having an intense inward agony, which may rightly be described as 'the dark night of the soul' easily finds a method, the solace of mind, a method within the reach of all, in the form of devotion or dedication to the Supreme spirit, who voluntarily descends into the humanity in both his human and divine form.

Bhakti is an emotional attachment distinct from knowledge or action. Emotion presents a living relation between individuals and becomes instinct with the force of religious feeling when it binds God and man. In the absence of the qualities of love and worship one is apt to be shut within the prison of one's own egoism. Rightly regulated it (Bhakti) may fittingly lead us to the perception of the Supreme. Such a method is open to all the weak and the lowly, the illiterate and also the intellectual and is also the easiest :

Mam hi partha vyapasritya ye'pi syuh papayonayah
Striyo vaisyas tatha sudras te'pi yanti param gatim

(*Gita*, IX. 32.)

Naham vedair na tapasa na danena na cejyaya
Sakya evamvidham drastum drstavan asi mam yatha XI. 53
Bhaktya tv ananyaya sakya aham evam vidho'rj una
Jnatum drastun ca tattvena pravestun ca parantapa XI. 54

In short, on the nature of Bhakti, it is wise to rest on the definition of Bhakti by Sandilya as the highest affection fixed on God *'sa paranuraktir isvare'* (1. 1. 2.) explained by Svapnesvara as a special mental feeling unto the Supreme Being : paramesvaravisayakantahkaranavrttivisesa eva bhaktih.

Svapnesvara in justification refers to the verse from the Visnupurana, (1. 20. 29) :

ya pritir avivekanam visayesv anapayini
Tvam anusaratah sa me hrdayan mapasarpatu

We should also refer to the statement contained in *the Bhagavata*, the Veda of the Vaisnavas, according to which

the highest Bhakti is to be disinterested and at the same time uninterrupted :

Ahaituky avyavahita ya bhaktih purusottame. III. 29. 12

Narada in his Bhaktisutra speaks of Bhakti as of the nature of highest love or affection as also of immortality :

Sa tasmin paramapremarupa amrtasvarupa ca 2-3.

In tune with what has been stated in the Chandogyopanisat (II. 23. 1) that one taking refuge in the Supreme Spirit may have the test of immortality (brahmasamstho' mrtatvam eti), Sandilya aphorises in the same form :

Tatsamsthasyamrtatvopadesat (1. 1. 30)

We may here refer to the identical rule contained in the Brahmasutra :

Tannisthasya moksopadesat. 1. 1. 7.

From these statements it becomes clear that out of the three expedients for the attainment of the highest goal of life, Bhakti stands to be the easiest. Thus without going to the highly expensive sacrificial cult entailing man, money and energy, and without endeavouring to go through the formalities of procuring Brahmavidya through long rigourous process of pupilage, one simply through concentrating one's mind on the Supreme Being may attain the same fruits as may be gained by other two difficult processes. The words of assurance from the lips of Lord Krsns in *the Bhagavadgita* XVIII. 65-66, really deserve mention here :

Manmana bhava madbhakto madyaji mam namaskuru
Mam evaisyasi satyam to pratijane priyo'si me
Sarvadharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja
Aham tvam sarvapapebhyo moksayisyami ma sucah

It is easy to adopt for an ordinary person one of the nine varieties of Bhakti as enumerated in the *Bhagavata* (VII. 5. 23-24) :

Sravanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam padasevanam
Arcanam vandanam dasyam sakhyam atmanivedanam
Iti Bumsarpita visnay bhaktis cen navalaksana
Kriyate bhagavaty addha tan manye' dhitam uttamam

With addition of two more, Narada speaks of eleven types, stressing at the same time that though eleven it is in spirit one :

Gunamahatmyasakti- rupasakti- pujasakti- smaranasakti-dasyasakti-sakhya-sakti-vatsalyasakti-kantasakti-atmaniveda-nasakti-paramavirahasaktirupa *ekadha api ekadasadha bhavati*. Naradabhaktisutra, 83.

The Brddhaharitasmrti, about which we shall state later on, has mention of nine aspects of Bhakti, not exactly in the same form but with minor variation.

In the Puranic text there are statements to the effect that remembering of the name of the Supreme Being is to be regarded as superior :

yani tesam asesanam krsnanusmaranam param.
Vis. Pu, II. 6. 39=Padma, VI. 72. 13)

This simple method of devotion in the form of mere worshipping the lord has been resemmended in the Bhagavadgita. Thus even for the sinners the Bhakti effers a path of salvation and for such a devotee there is no case of loss or destruction :

Api cet suduracare bhajate mam ananyabhak

Sadhur eva sa mantavyah samyag vyvasite hi sah IX. 30
More boldly : Kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati.
IX. 31

This interpretation of Bhakti may go a long way to bring within its fold a greater number of persons in the society, leading ultimately to integration as we may call it. It is in the Sandilyasutra that we get a serious attempt for rationalisation of the cult of devotion when it has been declared that people of all classes including even those of condemned nature are entitled to practise this Bhakti form of religion, thereby effecting a very bold breakthrough in the barrier of religious puritanism. The rule is :

Anindyayony adhikriyate paramparyat samanyavat.

That through following the path of devotion merely, a person of lower status may elicit respect of the society, has been declared in the Padmapurana :

Pulkasah svapace vapi ye canye mecchajatayah
Te'pi vandya mahakhaga haripadaikasevakah 1. 5. 10

The same attitude has been repeated in the same Puranic text :

Yesam mukhe haret nama hrdi visnuh sanatanah
Udare visnumaivedyam sa svapake'pi vaisnavah

IV. 10. 96

It is thus noticed that the territery of religion tended through this cult of Bhakti to be widened so much so that more and more persons of different sects or no sects felt it convenient to accept and welcome this simplified form of religion. The *Bhagavata* makes reference to the fact that it is through the adoption of Bhakti, the censured castes, even

the foreigners, felt themselves purified. It is thus held there :

Kirata-huna-ndhra-pulind-pulkasa
Abhira-kanka yavanah khasadayah
Ye'nye ca papa yadupasrayasrayah
Sudhyanti tasmai prabhavisnave namah

Bhagavata, II. 4. 18

Incidentally it may be noted that in the Aitareyabhahmana VII. 18 (33.6) these castes have been mentioned as consured ones :

Ta ete 'ndhrah pundrah sabarah pulinda mutiva ity udantya bahave bhavanti Vaisvamitra dasyunam bhuyisthah.

We may refer further here to an inscription of the ninth year of an Abhira king Isvarasena in the Nasik Caves, No. 15, Plate VII.

That thse statements are not worthy to be bypassed will be evident from the fact that through the reaction of this cult of devotion in an extended form even in the middle ages in India we find the emergence of women sages and saints like Mirabai and Andal in South India, untouchables as saints like Nanda, Cokhamela in Maharastra, Raidas (a chamar disciple of Ramananda, and sinners like Ajamila honoured as saints. Reference should also be made to the sayings of Kabir a Moslem weaver and Tukaram, which though not scholastic were accepted by both the Hindus and the Muslims alike, including orthodox Brahmins because of the devotional fervour.

History of our country will bear testimony to the fact that in order to meet the challenge of the situation caused by Muslim invaders as also by Buddsism, several steps were

contemplated. From the point of view of Dharmasastra, Nibandha texts, were composed, prominent being the Krtyakalpatary in North by Laksmidhara (in 1110-1130 A.D.) and the Caturvargacintamani of Hemadri in South (in the 3rd quarter of the 13th century). In the spiritual front the emergence of the cult of Bhakti in a modified form received enthsiastic response from the saints and mystics almost throught all the parts of India, such as Jnanesvara, Namadeva, Ramananda, Kabir, Caitanya, Dadu (in Rajasthan), Nanak, Vallavhacarya, Ekanatha, Tukaram, Ramdas, who amongst other things preached the doctrine of dedication unto the Deily The doctrine of Bhakti may be stated to be successful in exerting appeal to the pecple to a greater extent and the long and varied way in which this cult has been treated in the puranas, may be stated to be successful in bringing back within their fold persons who otherwise took to Buddhism for one reason or other. Mahayana Buddhism adopted some of the aspects of Bhakti cult. The power of telerance became a great factor in popularising the cult of Bhakti. Thus we find the declaration in the Gita :

Ye'py anyadevatabhakta yajante sraddhayanvitah
Te'pi Mam eva kaunteya yajanty avidhipuvakam IX. 23

This idea in more eulogistic terms, the Brahmapurana declares :

Krtvapi bahusah papam nara mohasamanvitah
Na yanti narakam natva sarvapapaharam harim
Atyantakrodhavanto'pi kadacit kirtayed dharim
So'pi dosaksayan muktim labhec cedipatir yatha
216. 87-89

The Vamanapurana is emphatic in declaring that remembrance

of the name of Visnu may yield the same result as may be attained by going to the holy places :

Prthivyam yani tirthani punyany ayatanani ca
Tani sarvany avapnoti visnor namanukirtanat

Vamana, 94. 63

Thus we arrive at a point where we may state that the Bhakti aspect of religion may be regarded as the only form through which people of all the walks of life may unite and integrate.



THE TEN TOPICS OF *THE BHAGAVATA*

Sri Rangadhar Sarangi

The Bhagavata mentions ten topics or characteristics in the tenth Chapter of its 2nd Skandha. These are : (1) Sarga, (2) Visarga, (3) Sthana, (4) Posana (5) Uti, (6) Manvantara, (7) Isanukatha, (8) Nirodha, (9) Mukti and (10) Asraya. These terms with slight variations are also mentioned in the 7th Chapter of the 12th Skandha. The terms *sthana* and *posana* occurring in the 2nd should be taken as synonymous with *Vrtti* and *raksa* of the 12th. *Isanukatha* and *Vamsanucarita* of the 2nd and 12th respectively should mean the same. Both *nirodha* and *mukti* of the 2nd should be understood in the sense of *samstha* of the 12th. Likewise, *uti* and *asraya* should mean *hetu* and *apasraya* respectively.

Since *the Bhagavata* alone is characterised by ten topics it is designated as a *Mahapurana* distinguished from any other ordinary *Purana* of five characteristics only. These are :— (1) Sarga, (2) Pratisarga, (3) Vamsa, (4) Manvantara, and (5) Vamsanucarita, meaning creation , destruction, genealogy of races, rules of piety and account of noble deeds. Besides *Bhagavata* Visnupurana also mentions the names of those ten topics. But as it describes only five of them instead of ten, it is obviously not reckoned as a Mahapurana. The ten topics of *the Bhagavata* have not been dealt with Skandha-wise because of the discrepancy in the number of Skandhas and the number of topics. Though the topics begin in

the third, yet they do not seem to have been serially from the third upto twelfth. They have not been restricted to particular Skandhas either. This is evident from the fact that they occur indiscriminately in all the Skandhas somewhere with more importance and somewhere with less. Therefore the first and the second Skandha should not be kept aside so far as our topics are concerned. Had there been a serial discipline in the treatment of the ten topics the last one i. e. *asraya* would have been shifted to the 12th Skandha, that being the last. But it has not been so done since the last topic *asraya*. Sri Krisna has been described elaborately in the tenth rather than the 12th.

The Bhagavata says that the first nine topics have been described with a view to presenting a clear understanding of the tenth or the last i. e. *asraya*. This is deduced from the actual words of the text in some cases, from their purport in some cases and from direct narration in a few. It is now high time to explain the terms one by one. The first one is *sarga* meaning creation according to the Sankhya doctrine which enumerates twenty-five categories. Prakrti or primordial matter is the cause of all causes. The *Mahat* or cosmic Intelligence evolves out of Prakrti to bring forth in its turn the Ahamkara or Cosmic Ego. This Ego gives rise to the five subtle elements of the mind and the ten Indriyas (five senses of perception and five organs of action). From the five subtle elements evolve the five gross elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether). Thus Prakrti is an uncaused cause while the Mahat, Aham and five Tanmatras are both cause and effect. The remaining sixteen categories i. e, mind, ten Indriyas and five gross elements are mere effects. But Purusa, the 25th category is neither cause nor effect, This 'sarga' (method of creation) was dire-

cted by the Lord to Brahma who did it with penance and time as instruments. Nine-fold creation has been described by Maitreya to Vidura in the third Skandha, which corresponds to the Sankhya theory of creation of the categories. This is only a brief note on 'sarga'. The next topic is 'visarga' which means collective creation of different species of living beings both mobile and immobile, impregnanted by the will of God and brought about by the latent *Karma* of the past. This is effected through the agency of Brahma with inspiration received from the Lord. The immobile creatures cited above denote herbs, shrubs, creepers, trees and all sorts of plants which constitute the Vrtti (means of livelihood) of the mobile creatures. The sustenance of living beings kept within their bounds is called *sthana*. It includes the entire terrestrial globe supporting both mobile and immobile creation. *Raksa* corresponding to 'posana' hints at the descent of the Lord on Earthly plain as and when He thinks it necessary, in human or non-human forms to exterminate the wicked, protect the honest and establish the righteous path leading to perfection. The next topic to be discussed is *Manvantara* meaning the period over which a Manu, his sons, the gods, the Indra (ruler of gods) the seven Seers and the particular manifestation of the Lord preside to protect *dharma*. It also means the virtuous conduct of the Manus presiding over the Manvantaras. Next comes *uti* meaning latent desires of various creatures leading to transmigration or bondage in the form of birth and death which corresponds to *hetu* or the cause of creation. Jiva as doer of action prompted by individual ignorance is therefore declared as the *hetu* of creation. Then comes the next topic *Isanukatha* meaning the life-accounts of the Lord and His devotees supplemented by various tales of which some are allego-

rical in spirit. This corresponds to *Vamsanucarita* or accounts of kings and emperor as well as their descendants upholding the honour and prestige of their races. The kings and emperors mentioned above were all devotees retiring to forest upon the call of time to lead the life of ascetics. One who hears their account develops a spirit of renunciation and steadfast devotion to the Lord. *Nirodha*, the next topic, means the withdrawal of the individual soul into the Body of the Lord with all its adjuncts when He falls asleep in yoganidra. *Mukti*, the last but one topic, is the realisation of the Jiva, of its true nature. These two correspond to *samstha* meaning four-fold dissolution of the universe manifested by Maya : (1) *Prakrta* or material (2) *Vaikrta* or radical, (3) *naimittika* or occasional and (4) *nitya* or constant. *Vaikrta* is optionally called *atyantika* meaning total deluge.

Now we come to the last topic i. e. *asraya* or *apasraya* as it is also called, which is the sub-stratum of the three phases of the universe i. e. creation, sustention and destruction. The scriptures call it the all-pervading Principle, the Indwelling Monitor or the Lord rejoicing in sport designated respectively as Brahma, Paramatma and Bhagavan. In *the Bhagavata*. Sri Krisna is extolled as enjoying the status of the three devine entities He is present in everything as cause and yet distinct from everything as the same. Just as gold is inherent in ornament and yet different from it as its material cause so is Sri Krisna in relation to the world. He is the witness of the three states of the Jivas namely wakefulness, dream and deep slumber. He knows the osubject, object and the presiding deity of sense perception. Hence He is designated as the *Asraya* or support of all beings having none else as His own support. We have explai-

ned in nutshell the ten topics which constitute the Mahapurana. Let us know further about it from Sridhara Swami, the celebrated commentator on *the Bhagavata.* The Swami has presented chapterwise a synopsis of every Skandha separately that deserves attention. There he has pointed out the ten topics as the subject matter of the ten Skandhas respectively beginning from the third. In the introductory verse of his commentary which is benedictory to Sri Krisna there is mention of the ten topics under discussion. In that verse the Swami says—"I bow down to that highest and most brilliant splendour named Sri Krisna who is characterised by nine features such as sarga, visarga etc. of the universe, Himself being the tenth (feature) i. e. asraya. The second Skandha simply mentions the names of the ten topic without giving any detailed description thereof. The first Skandha remains silent over the matter. Hence these two Skandhas have been eliminated by the Swami while discussing the present sbjects. The subject-matter they deal with hardly concerns our topics. So the subject actually begins from the third Skandha and continues up to the last covering thereby the entire text within it. This article presents before its readers the observations of the Swami in this regard in his learned commentary.

According to him, 'sarga' or creation in general is dealt with in the third Skandha consisting of thirty-three chapters only. *Sarga* means the creation of the world due to disturbance in the equilibrium of the three *gunas* or modes inherent in Prakriti caused by the will of God. It is of ten varieties according to the evolution of categories and beings such as Mahat Aham, Bhuta, Aindriya, Deva and Tamas, as well as Mukhya, Tiryak, Arvak and Nara. These have been explained in *the*

Bhagavata itself and might be referred to there by persons wanting to know about it in detail. Visarga or creation in particular of living beings at large has been described in the 4th Skandha by thirty-one chapters. It is done by Brahma with the assistance and co-operation of the Manus or Prajapatis under the direct supervision of God. The next topic is *sthana* or *sthiti* meaning the maintenance of maryada of area-demarcation of the different spheres of the globe in various ways. Such demarcation at the outset is said to be threefold only keeping in view the three terrestrial, middle and celestial spheres. But in due course it becomes manifold owing to the relative position of planets and their movements. On Earth this demarcation is maintained separately by separate ruling chiefs over the seven islands like *Jambu*, Plaksa etc., over the mountains like *Lokaloka* etc. and over the oceans like salt, wine etc. The same in the upper sphere is maintained by gods and that in the nether regions is maintained by demons. The first twenty chapters of the 5th Skandha deal with the demarcation of islands maintained by sovereign rulers of the Earth like Priyavrata and others. In the next three chapters the solar, lunar and stellar orbits have been described along with the sun, moon and stars as their presiding lords. The seven nether regions and infernoes numberring eighty-four have also been described along with their respective lords or guardians in the next three chapters. Here ends *sthana* and next comes *posana*.

The sixth Skandha deals with *posana* by twenty-one chapters. It is said in the preceding Skandha that Visnu gives protection to all beings coming through Visarga within their respective areas. To do this He assumes various forms called *Avatara* either human or

non-human as He thinks proper to the occasion. This way of giving safety to beings is called *sthana* as pointed out earlier. But *posana* is different from *sthana* in that it is meant for selected devotees only while the latter comprise all beings in general. *Posana* is concerned only with devotees. God's grace is guaranteed to them even if they violate the rules of conduct prescribed by scriptures. For instance, take the case of Ajamila who is the vilest sinner among mankind or of Indra, the vilest sinner among gods. Ajamila left no sins uncommitted and yet he was declared to be a devotee of God by the messengers of Visnu when he uttered the name Narayana at his last breath. While uttering such name, he was all along thinking of his last child who was also Narayana by name, out of compassion for that helpless being. Narayana, the Supreme Being was not the object of his thought then. Yet the result of uttering that name even by samketa (improper denotation) reduced all his sins to ashes and made him ascend to Vaikuntha. This may appear some what paradoxical to a speculative mind but the efficacy of uttering the holy name, as it appears, crosses all boundaries of speculation. Similar is the case of Indra, the Sovereign among gods. He committed all crimes including murders one after another. His first victim was Visvarupa, once appointed as his preceptor on an emergency measure during the sudden disappearance of Brhaspati, Visvarupa played treachery with Indra and was, therefore, beheaded by him in vengeance. The second victim was Vrtra, a Brahmin by birth and a distant brother to Indra. There are instances of Indra's ill-treatment towards his superiors and subordinates as well. He was also involved in adultery and promiscuous acts. Despite these, he is declared as a staunch devotee of Lord Visnu called *Upendra* (younger brother of Indra) for that matter. Upendra grants utmost protection to

the life and property of Indra, his elder brother. He even gives him safety in battlefield, during warfare against enemies. This way of granting safety to devotees by the Lord is called *posana* explained in these two instances. The next item is *uti* dealt with in the 7th Skandha by fifteen chapters. *Uti* means *Vasana* or desire that drives a person to do this or that for its gratification. It becomes two-fold owing to difference in purpose or intention :

(1) Auspicious and inauspicious or beneficial and detrimental. Uti becomes beneficial by the grace of *Sadhus* or realised souls, and detrimental due to their wrath. Take for instance the case of Jaya and Vijaya and the case of Prahallada as well, Jaya and Vijaya are the two devoted servants of the Lord in Vaikuntha. Once the celebrated *catuhsana* (the four holy ascetics moving together) came to Vaikuntha for paying homage to the Lord. No sooner did they enter the portals of the divine abode, than were they charmed at the sweet smell of *Tulsi* and other offerings made to Him. Then they proceeded forward to meet the Lord in His chamber, but to their surprise, were badly obstructed by the two attendants at the entrance gate itself. This sort of ill-treat ment roused the fury of the ascetics who, in their turn, cursed the two attendants to fall off from Vaikuntha immediately. The curse took effect and they had to quit Vaikuntha to appear on the mundane plain as demons. In spite of the fact that they were true devotees staying in the Lord's abode, their mind was upset by the evil thought of fighting against their Master. And the only reason of such transgression was the wrath of the ascetics transformed to curse. On the other hand, Prahallada, though born from a demon and a demoness developed the auspicious desire of cultivating

steadfast devotion at the feet of the Lord only due to the grace of Narada. Everyone knows that Prahallada's cruel father tried his best to deviate his son's mind from Hari. But he could not succeed in so doing due to Narada's grace on Prahallad which succeded in the long run. This anecdote of Jaya and Vijaya and of Prahallada reminds us of the importance of the Sadhus and the action taken by Visnu according to their desire. He commits to protect His devotees in all circumstances. That is why the two attendants were reinstated to their post after their third birth on this plain was over. In the present perspective, we see that it is always wise to try sincerely to get the grace of the Sadhus. That achievement is perhaps the be-all and end-all of our existence here. *Uti* dealt with in this Skandha aims at this end in view. Here the first ten chapters show the difference in vasana (desire) aroused either by compassion or by anger of illumined souls. There is instruction in these chapters to cherish noble desires against worldly ambitions. And to fulfil that mission noble deeds should always be performed against immoral acts. The last five chapters of this Skandha focus on the ascertainment of Dharma or religious duty to purify the mind. The discourse on *Uti* ends here giving scope to *Manvatara* described in the 8th Skandha by twenty four chapters. It deals with the functions of a Manu and his other functionaries holding office in his administration. The functionaries of a Manu include (i, his sons (ii) the seven sages (iii) the gods (iv) the Indras (v) and the fourteen incarnations of Hari. Manu and his five functionaries are different in different Manvantaras. Manvantara is a time unit denoting a period of seventy-one *caturyugas* (four yugas counted as one), one *caturyuga* being equivalent to 43,20000 years. In every Manvantara fresh appointments

are made of the Manus and their functionaries. The over-all duty of the Manus is to practise and preach the tenets of Dharma among their subjects. In this context one is reminded of the famous adage of the Mahabharata which proclaims : Dharma, protected becomes able to protect. The characteristic of Manvantara, therefore, is the establishment of Dharma or the path of piety which saves its seekers from all evils, leading them to perfection.

The next item in our list is *Isanukatha* (Tales of God and His devotees) expatiated in the ninth Skandha with a view to extolling the glories of Sri Krisna in the long run. This Skandha mainly treats of the various incarnations of God. It also describes the genealogy of the Vaivasvata and his sons along with an account of their deeds. The mind purified by the observance of *sad-dharma* or righteous conduct alone becomes able to grasp the auspicious narratives of the Lord and His devotees. Unless the mind becomes permeable to receive, these tales of unique character cannot enter into it. The heroic exploits of the kings belonging to solar and lunar races who were invariably devoted to the loving service of God are also a part and parcel of *Isanukatha*.

Next comes *Nirodha* dealt with in the 12th Skandha, meaning suppression or annihilation of the wicked sovereigns who prosper only when Dharma is depressed or fatigued. The purpose of this topic is to extol the glory of Sri Krisna alone, the embodiment of both *asrita* (refugee) and *asraya* (refuge). He is designated as the Bliss Absolute sporting in the ocean of the Yadus. *Nirodha* is of four kinds such as

mentioned earlier. The process of creation, destruction etc. of the universe is also discussed in this Skandha. The last but one item is *mukti* or salvation which is a state of remaining in one's own being as against the state of remaining otherwise. In other words, it is the state of being as opposed to the state of becoming. It is elaborately dealt with in eleventh Skandha by thirty-one Chapters through discourse between Nimi and the nine Yogendras. Narada briefly describes the same to Vasudeva, while Krisna explains it in detail to Uddhava citing proper evidence. The last topic is *asraya* described in the tenth Skandha by ninety chapters. It becomes two-fold with reference to (i) *adhisthana* (substratum) and (ii) *avadhitva* (state of termination). As such Sri Krisna alone is recogniged as the *asraya* par excellence of the universe.

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SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM

Dr Sradhakara Supakar

When we study the spiritual and Puranic literature of our country, we are struck by its richness and the profound philosophy contained therein. India is the birth place of incarnations of God, Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, the original propounders of Jainism and Buddhism. It is also the birthplace of many saints and social reformers like Sankaracharya, Nanak, Chaitanya, Ramanuja, Madhavdev and Shankara Dev, all of whom have shown us the path to bliss and salvation. *The Ramayana, the Mahabharata* and *the Srimad Bhagavat* are the most valuable masterpieces of the spiritual literature of our country. Their appeal for the betterment of man-kind is universal and is not confined to Hinduism only. Therefore, we derive inspiration from these books to guide our daily conduct and build our character on the line of their teachings.

The life of Lord Sri Krishna is dealt with in great detail in *Srimad Bhagavata*. In the second Skanda of *the Bhagavata*, its author declares :

We generally speak of ten Avataras or incarnations of God but *Bhagavata* mentions twenty four Avataras and says that the other incarnations are the partial manifestations of God but Krishna is God himself. We picture Krishna as of dark complexion. But in this context, Krishna does not connote black colour. Black colour is said to be inauspicious. The word Krishna is derived from the root to attract.

In other words He is Krishna, because "He draws creatures from worldly matters and puts them near Himself. There is another Sloka to explain the significance of the word :

"*Krsi* means earth and *na* means height of bliss. When they are put together Krishna, the word so derived connotes 'Param Brahma', the Supreme God. Out of the twelve Skandas (the 10th one is again sub-divided into Gopa-Lila and Dwaraka Lila) practically the whole of the last three Skandas deal with the Avatara of Sri Krishna.

In our daily life, we are bewildered by the ways of God. Very learned men, devoted scholars are bypassed and the blessings of God are showered on the semi-literate, the handicapped, the untalented persons, like Surdas, Kabir, Nanak, and others. Closer at home, we have the example of Bhima Bhoi. We can not explain such phenomena by reasons. The lives of the Avataras also cannot be the subject of rational explanataion. We are asked not to judge the conducts of the Avataras by human yardsticks of propriety.

The treatment of love affairs and the amorous conduct of Sri Krishna with the Gopis as described in the first part (Gopa-lila) of the tenth book of *Srimad Bhagavata* is an illustration. The treatment of love affairs between Krishna and the Gopies in *the Bhagavata* is very restrained. In the 29th Chapter the Gopa-Lila of the 10th Skanda, Srikrishna rebukes the Gopis for leaving their husbands and families for love-making with him. Only when the Gopies express the idea that he is no other than God to them, that Krishna satisfies their craving for His love.

This is followed by Rasa-Lila. But the author warns the readers not to follow the examples of Krishna literally.

This problem is put by the Raja, "The Lord of the Universe appeared on the earth for the establishment of Dharma and for suppression of its opposite (Adharma). He is the propounder of righteous conduct. its owner and protector. Oh, Br ahman (preceptor) (Please explain) how does he act contrary (to such righteous conduct) and support Adultery?"

Suka replies to this question as follows :

"Gods have been seen transgressing Dharma, They do (apparently) rash acts. As fireconsumes everything, so do those with (divine) power. A person without occult power never would think of docing such act, if he does so out of foolishness, he is finished as if taking poison when one is ailing."

Laxminath Bezbarua, the famous Assamese Poet and thinker discusses this aspect of *the Bhagavata,* in great detail in his "Rasalila Tatwa" and quotes Shridhara Swamy to say that since the poet uses the expression the real meaning is that Krishna obtained mastery over lust in Rasalila.

Whereas the original *Bhagavatam* gives a very restrained picture o Sri Krishna, while describing the Rasa Lila or Bastra Harana, later writers are not restrained in their delineation of the dalliance of Krishna with Radha. We do not find even the mention of Radha in *the Bhagavata* or *the Mahabharat*. In a learned article entitled "Radha in the Puranic and the allied Literature—The Concept and the Development". Pandit Biswanarayan Sastri of Guwahati says that *the Bhagavata* does not mention Radha by name nor does the *VisnuPuran,* but the love between Radha and Krishna is mentioned briefly in some Puranas e. g. Matsya Puran, Padma Puran and only the Brahma

Baibarta Puran gives a rather detailed account of the love affair between Radha and Krishna (Ref. Page 62-78 Krishna Kanta felicitation Volume). Later authors carried the love affairs to the extent of voluptuousness. Poet Jayadeva, Bhakta Charan, Abhimanyu, Kavisurya Baladev and others follow this tradition.

Sringar is the adi (prime) Rasa and the rules of aesthetics expect the poet par excellence to describe the different types of heroes and heroines and their moods. How sweet and succulent the Rasa can be, if you describe the Khandita, the Basaka Sajja, the Swadhina Bhatruka etc., the amorous Jalakeli etc. Can you put in the Divine as hero and heroine to describe even the sublime love, not the voluptuous one ?. A giant of a poet Kalidas developed cold feet when he had to depict the amour of Siva and Parvati. It is forbidden. In literature, love play between your father and mother is a taboo outright. What do the poets do then ? If Krishna attracts you from mundane affairs with his flute, and you want salvation without tears, why not say it with a song ?

Like *the Gita, the Bhagavata* also dilates on importance of Bhakti or devotion to God. This is most clear from the 14th Chapter of 11th Skanda.

In short Bhakti or devotion is the better way of reaching God than Yoga, Dharma, study of scriptures penance or charity. In recent years Swami Vivekananda says the same thing in his own inimitable language as follows :

"We the Bhaktas soon, through the mercy of Lord reache a plain where pedantic and powerless region is left

far behind and the intellectual groping through dark gives to the day-light of direct perception. He no more reasons and believes, He also perceives. He no more argues his senses and is not this seeming God and feeling God and enjoying God higher than everything else. Nay, Bhaktas have not been wanting to have maintained that it is higher than even Mukhya liberation.

BHAGAVATISM IN PRE-MUSLIM BENGAL

Suresh Chandra Moitra

Guptas came to Bengal with many of the features of the Aryan culture. Till then Bengal was merely a confluence of so many janapadas. It had not yet attained a geographical unity In the Aitareya Aranyaka (2/1/3) we first find the name of Vanga. In Aitareya Samhita Pundras were mentioned as a particular tribe, but with much infancy. They were branded as robbers (Dasyus).

In the Ramayana and the Mahabharata Vanga was mentioned. In the Mahabharata we find a fable where Vanga Anga, Kalinga, Pundras, and Sumha were described as different tribes. People and their homeland still were not inseparably associated. Dharmasutra of Bondhayana gave an injunction that if any person visited this part of the land, he would have to undergo a penance. In such a state of affairs religion of the inhabitants of those territories is seldom taken into serious consideration.

In a Jaina book, Acaranga Sutra the people of Radha country behaved very badly with Mahavira, the great Jaina Preceptor. But the popularity of the faith in Bengal was an old story. Bhadravahu, the great Jaina teacher was the preceptor of Candra Gupta Maurya. Bhadravahu was a son of Bengal. Moreover, some of the sects of the Jaina Church (Monastry) were named after some of the important cities of Bengal—Pundra Vardhaniya, Tamraliptiya, Kotivarsia.

The first stone plaque inscription found in Mahasthana was a document which was ingravod in Prakrta. In this inscription we find the name of Pundranagara, and this inscription gives little information about the religion prevailing in the area. Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar interpreted the word 'Samavamgiya' as a particular section of the people; but Dr. B. K. Barua's suggestion probably is more, correct. He gave the word 'Samavamgiya' a Sanskritised form; 'Samavangikanam' which means the people belonging to S dvargika seat of the Buddhists.

During the rule of Asoka the great, in Pundranagar there were as much people of the Buddhist faith as of the people belonging to Ajivik faith. In a fued of minor nature some of the Buddhists lost their lives. At the order of Asoka thousands of Ajiviks were put to death (Legends of Asoka—Pryzulsky. Translated by Dilip Coomar Visvasa).

The second inscription was found in Susunia hills, 18 miles off Bankura. Between Mahasthan and Susunia inscriptions there is a gap of about seven hundred years. Religion is not a super-reality; it marches with the life of the people. So the gap of seven hundred years does not obviously speak the blank or void in the religio s life of the people. With the spread of non-Brahminical faiths, some Brahminical faiths made their presence felt in the social fabric of Bengal. It has become nearly an axiomatic truth that Bhagavatism came to Bengal with the help of the Guptas. But history has something different to narrate. Susunia rock edict negates this assumption. It is dated C. 300 A. D. It is written in pure Sanskrit and with the Brahmi script of the northern region. Mahasthana incription was written in Prakrit; and it is a solitary instance. The said inscription reads as follows—'The creation of the prosperous

Maharaja Candra Varman, son of the illustrious Simha Varman, the Lord of Pushkarna dedicated to the Wielder of discuss (Cakra Svami) by the foremost of his slaves."

The identity of this Candravarman was debated for a long time. Now it is almost accepted that this Candravarman is identical with Candravarman of Meherauli fame, near Kutab Minar of Delhi (Indian Antiquary, 1913-Haraprasada Sastri pp. 217-219). A coin marked with Visnu Cakra was found at Karnasuvarna. The scholars dated it as belong to the later half of the sixth century.

II

Guptas were ardent Vaishnavites; they extended their rule over almost all the Janapadas, Sumha, Kajangal, Pundra bardhanabhukti, Samantatta Dattaka and Harikela, as their coins were discovered from all these territories. A coin of Candra Gupta I was discovered in a village named Matha in the district of Burdwan. A coin of the similar type issued by the same king was unearthed in Gaya, Bihar (Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1889-Cunningham-pp-63). But all these discoveries of coins from different areas of the country do not assertively tell that the whole of the territory was under their umbrella. It was Samudra Gupta who made a conquest of all corners of Bengal. He performed the Asvamedha Sacrifice to commemorate his splendid victory.

Candra Gupta II succeeded Samudra-Gupta. Under his rule the real administrative excellence of the Guptas was felt. But the first inscription in the royal authority of the Guptas issued in the name of Kumar Gupta. It was issued from the district administrative centre of Kotivarsa in Pundravardhana bhukti. Late Akshoy Kumar Moitra procured it

from the house of a Muslim gentleman in a village in the subdivision of Nator, Rajsahi, now in Bangladesh. It was edited by R. D. Banerjee and further modification of the reading of the inscription was done by R. G. Basak. His reading is now accepted by all scholars. Nine copper plate inscriptions of the Gupta period are so far discovered. The first copper plate inscription issued in favour of the Brahmins who perform their religious functions but worshipping of a particular deity was not specified. But some of the names of Brahmins suggest the Vaisnava faith had already made a great impact on the people of Gouda. Gosthaka, Visnu, Visnubhadra, Gopala, and Subhadra-all betray their Vaisnava contact. The land was given to one Brahmin named Varaha Svami. Bengal had passed through all those stages of tilling the land. Long long before, the plough was introduced. But intellectual and economic march of the people goes rarely on the same speed. In the third inscription of the Guptas (Damadarpura Copper plate inscription of the time of Kumara Gupta 444 A. D.) the name of the Chief scribe was Samba-pala. Samba was a son of Krishna. It was issued from Koti-varsa : (Bengada). Kotivarsa was in one inscription named as Sonitapura. The demon-king Bana was the father of Usa, a beautiful girl whom Aniruddha, a son of Krisna abducted. Aniruddha was included in the Vynhavada, a panel of family gods. Thus the Bhagavatism had two seets—Vynhavada and Avataravada. Vynhavada seems to be more ancient. It was a tribal theology in which none other than blood relations of Krisna were incorporated.

(Visnupurana 5, 33, Sloka No. 11)

The copper plate inscription of Budha Gupta, a pecu-liar name of a God is mentioned. Once, there was a

controversy regarding the identity of the God Kokamukha-Svami. It was identified as God Siva, even as Goddes Durga. Now, scholars consider it as a variation of Narashimhadeva. Worshipping of God such as Cakra-svami, varaha, kokamukha svami suggest a stage when the society was in a primitive phase. Similar to the traditions of the Egyptians? Gods with animal forms were deified. Vyuhavada was some-what a developed form of worshipping. It failed in unifying the people of different tribes for its archaic form.

'The sixth copper plate inscription of the Guptas spoke for the worshipping of Visnu. Land was granted but not for the construction of a new temple but for rapairing and maintenance of the old one. Thus the cult of Visnu had already attained popularity. In another land grant document we find both Siva and Visnu were given equal status.

The culmination from Vyuhavada to Avataravada the country was proceeding from veneration of Vibhutis (powers) to the highest form of worshipping—Suddhadvaita system. Prof. Hemachandra Rai Coudhuri asscerted that Vyuhavada was totally absent in Bengal. The learned professor should have been a little more cautions in opinion this. Society progress in a process. Growth of agriculture fast developed city-life which was an enemy to tribal attitude Even in Pundravardhan people of different trades and professions had to work many times unitedly. There might be some guilds of artisans and craftsmen. We now come across several names echoing the *Bhagavata* faith such as Yasosvami, Kumar Visnu, Krishnamitra, Hari Sarma, Krisna Datta, Guha Visnu, Soma Visnu, Narayana Deva, Gopala, Devita Visnu, Garga, Visvarupa, Laksmidhar, Darbhapani,

Varaha, Byapata, Harighosa, Ladaha Candra, Gopa Canda, Sri Candra, Somesvara, Halayudha, Hari Varman, Pitamvara, Visvarupa, and Madhusena. Only the Brahmins were not blessed with the names after *Bhagavata.* Even the place names bear the imprint of *Vagavatism* i. e. Damodarpur, Nanyamandala, Jarikel, Gokula etc.

III

Sculpture of Bengal had a great deal of ur debtedness to as well as inspiration from *Bhagavata.* Love for the God or Bhakti does not generate suddenly. It has a long path-emotional as well as ritualistic to traverse to reach the point. Various forms of Visnu were worshipped, perhaps, Conch, wheel, mace and lotus in hand Visnu was much more adored. And Laksmi was be by his side. In the Gupta coins the king is represented alongwith his consort. And king was also in company with Laksmi. Laksmi had an owl as her vehicle (bahana), just like the Greek Goddess of abundance. The king was seen slaying a lion, on a rhinoceros. All these testified his might and powers. The king was 'Apratigha'. Undoubtedly the Guptas established peace and order in their territories. They gave uniformity to the weights and seals, a common script, and a standard currency to the country. But the second phase of *Bhagavatism* dawned over. The concept of personal God loomed large. The incarnations such as Matsya, Kurma, Varaha and Vamana only served ss decorations. Of the walls of the temples. Sometimes they enjoyed a position of reverence in the terracotta panels. Cunningham while excavating Pundravardhana found Varaha, Vamana, Narasimha, Balarama and Krisna images. Some of the

images might have been worshipped. (Archaeological Survey of India's Report Vol. XV, P. 108-109).

In Bengal stone is not easily available. Gupta suzerainity was spread over a large tract of land, and Rajmahal was included in their kingdom. Most of the icons of Bengal were either made of clay or of basalt rock. Rajmahal supplied the raw material. Black basalt of Rajmahal had a limitation, it can not show any display of light and shade. The difference between the sculptures of Saranath and of Bengal is the difference of the character of the materials used for the purpose.

The Pahadpur monastery is unique for its illustration of multitudinous of our ancient life. Many events of Jataka stories were illustrated, even common folk at work and in their leisurely mood were given prominence. Life had abundant wealth to show. There are several terracottas connected with *The Bhagavata Purana*. At least ten events had been nicely depicted—

1. Devaki giving new-born Krishna into the lap of Basudeva.
2. Basudeva walking towards Gokula keeping Krishna in his lap.
3. Krishna, as a boy stealing butter.
4. Krissna and Balarama playing with their playmates.
5. Balarama killing Pralambasura.
6. Krishna killing Kesi demon.
7. Krishna upholding Govardhana hillock to vanquish the powers of Indra the rain-God.

8. Krishna uprooting the Yamalarjuna tree.
9. Krishna and Balarama jointly putting Kamsa to death
10. Krishna playing flute joyfully.

There was a unique terracotta depicting a couple in an amorous mood. K. N. Dikshit described this panel as Radha Krishna in their loving embrance (Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India, No. 53). This amatory couple was taken as Rukmini or Satyabhama and Krishna by Professor Sarasi Kumar Saraswati. We cannot understand why this embracing couple is not taken as ordinary man and woman, when we find that the Pala rulers were very tolerant. In the Paharpur monastery there are numerous Brahminical and non-Brahminical icons alongwith a large number of secular images. The art born out of the court patronage is placed by the side of art born of folk inspiration without any remorse. The life is manifested in all of its colour and rhythm. Like Palas, many of their vassal kings acted in the similar manner. In the Kamuli copper plate grant of Vaidyadeva, the names of Visnu, Vamana, Nrsimha, Parasurama Krishna had been mentioned. Though the inscription opens with an invocation to Lord Visnu, it does not hesitate to honour Vigrahapala and Rampala of the famous dynasty. Gourav Misra, a minister of Narayanpala deva erected a column to depict his family achievements. This was the Garuda pillar in the village of Buddul in the district of Dinajpur (now in Bangladesh). The edict written on the pillar was deciphered by Sri Charles Williams, the great Sanskritist in 1780. The hybrid bird Garuda (half man, half bird) was the carrier (Vahana) of Visnu. It attained a god head prior to Hanumana. In Paharpur and Vikram Sila monasteries Hanuman was only

a monkey, and nothing more. The power and prestige of a Gupta monarch was typified through a Garuda-dhvaja, a banner emblemed with a replica of Garuda.

IV

Bhagavatism as revealed in sculpture and in coins had always received much attention. Literary evidences of *the Bhagavata* influence before the Sixteenth Century are really very meagre. Firstly, it was for the reason that the materials used for writing was very easy wearing. Durability like stone or baked clay toys is not to be expected here. Handmade paper quickly wears away. Literary evidences of Bhagavatism are collected in two compilations—one had been done by Vidyakara at Jug-gaddul Mahavihar near Ramavati; another had been compiled by Sridhar Dasa, son of Batudasa, the foreign minister of Laksmana Sena. Moreover the scholars then were very much engrossed in discussing knotty questions of Nyaya, Smrti, Alamkara, and Vyakarama. Intricate problems of the Buddhist philosophy were enthusiastically debated in Nalanda, Vikramsila, Jug-gaddul Mahaviharas. And Goudiya people stood apart from the main current of Indian literary exertion. Then in the most part of India, Prakrt was the main vehicle of emotional expressions—literary enterprises. In Bengal barring one inscription, all the inscriptions were written in Sanskrit, In literature when Prakrit was resorted to it was almost *apabhramsa*—a hybrid Sanskrit for the heretic non-Brahminical writings. The eminent Sanskrit poet Rajasekhara noted it without any mistake :

The pronunciation of Prakrta by Goudian people was defective.

Even Goddess Saraswati herself approached Brahma with a fervent prayer that the people of Gouda country either should abandon Prakrta language or accept an alternative goddess. Prakrta or no Prakrta Goudiya people showed no lack of creative energy even with pen on paper. Some of the inscriptions are of high poetic value, particularly Dhanaidaha copper plate inscription of Dharmapala Deba and Deopara inscription of Vijoisena. All these inscriptions were written in chaste Sanskrit and according to the dictates of classical prosody. A complete Kavya depicting the exploits of Krishna was not written in Bengal other than *Sri Gita-Govindam* by Joideva. Dhoyi wrote a complete Kavya named *Pavana-dutam*—a kavya of romantic nature depicting love affair of Laksman Sena with a nymph named Kuvalaya-vati. Govardhan Acarya, wrote *Arya-Saptasati* after *Gatha Saptasati* of Hala written in Maharastrian Prakrt. *Arya-Saptasati* had no story to develop. It is rather compilation of some lyrics of varied interest, 'Prakirna Kavitas or poems of smaller unit'. In *Subhasita Ratna-kosa* of Vidyakara[@] of Jaggaddal Mahavihara we find eighty-eight slokas relating to mother Jasoda. Poets have never felt shame in taking their clues from *the Harivamsa*, Visnupurana, Bhagavata Purana, because they had to narrate the miraculous activities and love-making sports of Radha and Krishna. They had also described the lilas of other Avataras (incarnations) such as Matsya in sloka nos. 24, 35; Varaha in 24, 27, Kurma in 39, Vamana in 26, 36, 155, Nrsimha in 28, 40, 43, 45, Valarama in 39. The adoration of the poets are mixed with love, fear and awe.

In *Subhasita Ratnakosa* we find a historical information. People have accepted Bhagavata religion as an integral part of their life.

Nama Samkirtan was practised long before the birth of Chaitanyadeva.

The *SudukiiKarnamrta*[7] was compiled after the collapse of Sena rule. But this imminent catastrophe of the country could not alter the song of the poets—neither in content, nor in style. They indulged in depicting amorous activities of Radha and Krishna. Certainly there are many folk elements mixed up with Puranic episodes. In the *Subhasita Ratnakosa* we find a peculiar information regarding the respective seniority of Rama vis-a-vis Krishna legends.

In *Sudukti Karnamrta* we find most of the poets are of the royal family or of the court. Ladaha Candra, Vallala Sena, Laksmana Sena, Visvarupa Sena, Madhu Sena, are all of the royal family. Halayudha Sulapani was a minister. Under the court of Laksmana Sena there were as many as five important poets. Umapatidhar, Sarana, Dhyi, Govardhan Acarya and Joideva.

Joideva was the foremost poet. He was born in Kenduli Some say it was in Bengal, some say it was in Orissa. Anoymity is a general feature of the medieval literature. So it is futile and useless in arguing about his identity.

A German scholar named Pischell remarked that *Sri Gitagovindam* was originally written in Prakrt, then it was rendered into Sanskrit. The structure of the poem and the thematic treatment of the poem and the different metrical arrangements lead him to a conclusion of this kind. It was written in Mitraksara, as Apabransa literature. Pischell's arguments are not always tenable but there must be some truth in it However, Joideva became

an All India poet, out-distancing all his contemporary poets. Modern Bengali poetry was much influenced by him. Beginning from Madhusudana down to Rabindranath he was dearly adored inspite of vituperative remarks of Bankimchandra and Pramatha Chowdhury. Among the court poets of Laksman Sena, Umapatidhara enjoyed an eminent place. It was he who composed the Deopara inscription of Lakshan Sena. The poetic beauty of this inscription was praised by all. Umapatidhara wrote a complete kavya but it was found missing, His small poems (Prakirna Kavita) are found in most of the Sankalanas. But Umapatidhara was a court poet out and out.

A similar tone and style was menifested in the poems of Govardhan Acharya. It was full of Yamaka and Slesa and the like.

Court poets never crossed the frontiers of the taste of the court. The court poets did not fight the evils of their life, darker and qruesome aspects and the society. They renounced the society, but society did not renounce anybody; he had to pay the penalty, Purana is a sacred annal; but it outlived its life. Then the worshipping of a Tubitree and stone (Salagrama Sila) were encouraged alongwith Radhakrishna and their associates. The coutry had to wait for a change till the birth of Caitanyadeva.



A HUMANIST'S APPROACH TO *SRIMAD BHAGAVATA*

Dr. Narendranath Mishra

The episode of 'Indrapuja Bhanjan' is in the tenth Skandha of *Srimad Bhagavata.* Every Skandha of *Bhagavata* bears the indelible mark of Krisna's life and action But the tenth Skandha occupies a unique position in the field of devotion as conceived by common man and approved as the highest bliss in human life by our tradition. A full-fledged biography of Krisna can be found only from this Skandha. In a way, *the Bhagavata Purana* also has laid emphasis on the tenth Skandha. It enumerates the ten characteristics of a *Purana* of which first nine are held to be useful in so far as they throw light on the tenth and the last characteristic i.e. 'Asraya'. Asraya, according to *The Bhagavata* is the source and the last resort of the universe, "sa asrayh parani brahma'. While the other Skandhas refer to Krisna in a casual way, the tenth Skandha embodies his complete personality. So says Sridhar while saluting Krisna the Supreme Reality in his introductory remark on the tenth Skandha. All others contain the nine characteristics about the creation and recreation etc., but the tenth contains the story of Sri Krisna the ultimate repose of the world—"Sri Krisna khyam param dharma jagad-dharma".

Sri Krisna was born in a moonless night in a prison cell which indicates the murky ignorance and the bondage of man. A boy born so helpless in Mathura

was taken to Gopa for safty where he not only bloomed to be an incarnation of love and beauty, but also became the great emancipator of man from the bandage of ignorance and fear. His love with gopis, the cowherd women reaches its climax in 'rasalila'. In fact Sri Krisna's life in Gopa was nothing but a continuous series of sports, and the Lord was nothing but all pleasure in the form of a playful child. This aspect of Krisna's life has caught our imagination and in poetry and myth he has been adorned as the great lover. He was a lover indeed, but that of right action and true knowledge. This is discernible from the the single episode of Indrapuja Bhanjan"

Krisna's birth and death, his life and action and even his name all could be explained from a metaphisicalpoint of view. It denotes nothing and everything. Before creation everything was dark and only after creation everything became lighted. From the 'susuptipada', the melting cruciple of all diversity, when there was no creation, where mere darkness (tamas) reigued supreme *the* Bhagavana as the starting point of creation may have been conceived as dark. This term black as an attribute of Bhagavana became his name. Visnu is conceived as having four hands. But standing for perfection of the ideals of man, Krishna is conceived as two handed. This Krisna with a lute performs his 'lila'-spots and with a 'cakra' performs his duties. *Bhagavata* gives sole importance to his 'lila', the 'lila' with gopis. In the notion of Krisna there are two aspects. One is a historical Krisna who was a king, arbitrator and friendly to the righteous and destroyer of wrong doers. But this is a manifestation of the eternal Krisna. The historical Krisna although is an ideal man uttamapurusa, still he suffers from the bondage of time. The eternal Krisna is

all pervading and infinite. This has been exemplified symbolically in two popular episodes of the tenth Skandha. The cowherd women complained to Jasoda about Krisna's tricks of stealing their butter and cream. The angry mother brought a rope to bind the boy. The more rope she brought, the shorter it proved to bind Krisna because it is impossible to confine the infinite to a finite object. In another episode while searching for stolen lumps of butter Jasoda saw inside the mouth of Krisna the whole of universe lying as an atom in the infinite expanse of heaven. Apart from this metaphysical explanation, such myths have their own value. The Nature within and without is always shrouded with mystery. When one cannot face the realities of life consciously, he takes the help of the subconscious. Myths record the subconscious revelation of a people faced with some of crisis in their marathon from the primitive to modern civilisation.

When we approach *The Bhagavata* and the life and action of Krisna from a humanist's point of view we need not ponder over the dichotomy of eternal or historical Kr!sna; one who transcends space-time and the other circumscribed by it, the one who plays with his vast potencies, and the other in transport with cowherd wives, the one who plays with alluring flute and the other who rules with the all grinding wheel, the one who kills the mightiest among men and demon with a whimper, but himself gets killed with the arrow of a hunter and so on.

A humanist is a rationalist. With the help of reason he explains, he understands and gains true knowledge. With this knowledge as his tool he works for the good of one and all. He never faulters, he never

fears. If he is a leader of man, he changes the heart of the believers to that of seekers and doers. Krisna a great and honest humanist wanted to persuade his own people to think rationally and act for the greatest good of all, to be at home with Nature outside and to live in peace with her within.

The vedic civilization began with great tradition of enlightment. The relics of this could be found in the earliest part of Rigveda and Atharva-Samhita. Specially this Atharva veda is in the main, a collection of song, spells and incantations for healing of disease, the restoration of harmony, the exorcism of evil spirit etc. Some of the hymns were of popular rather than priestly origin. There are certain hymns of rare beauty that celebrate the beneficence of Mother Earth.

May Earth pour her milk for us
a mother unto me her son
O Prthivi, auspicious be thy wood land,
auspicious be thy hills and snow clad mountains.

(An Advanced Atiston of India, vol. 1, p. 50)

In early vedic age the people sang the joy of life. They were moved by the wonder of Nature What they gained through their co-operative effort, was soon exploited by the kings and priests. In later vedic age the real spirit of yajna i. e. to work together for common good was lost. The true religion of man was substituted by ritualism in the form of burning sacred fire, in human animal sacrifice sanetified cruelty and war. During the period of aranyak and upanisad the era af 'yajna' and animal sacrifice was gradually replaced by a different kind of thinking in which superiority of knowledge over belief and importance of action

over ritual were acknowledged. The religion and philosophy of *the Bhagavata* was conceived during this post vedic period of reform. The nucleus of *the Bhagavata* could be found in "Indrapuja-bhanjan" when Krisna challenges the supremacy of Indra and the folly of performing yajna : "pajasah codate meghah mahendra kim karisyati"? As a law of Nature it rains. What will the great Indra do ? Work is worship was the motto. The law of action, its irresistibility and sovereign status seem to challenge the very existence of God. In Jagannath Das's *Bhagavata* Krisna spoke to Nanda to this effect.

10th Skandha 25 : 13 : 15

With his argument Krisna won over the cowherd king Nanda and the whole community of Gopa. Worship of Indra was abandoned for ever. All the materials collected for the yajna were taken to Gobardhan in a procession. There was a great feast and merry making. Cows were fed sumptuously. Trees around the mountain were nourished. An oblation was offered to the mountain. The King, Brahmins, the cowherd women, mothers with their children in arms, and cows with their calves all moved around the mountain to the beating of drums and when going round and round being driven by the eternal force they all came to the top of the mountains. There they came to know about the ultimate truth that God is not an entity which lives away from us. He is a part and parcel of our life. We feel his presence in our surrounding environment. He is our own world which could be seen, touched, adorned, loved and to be at home with. This manifestation of God was visible to the Gopis in the form the mountain Govardhan. Its vastness, majesty, its beautiful sylvan forest incalcated the faith in them that in all tne ordeal of life this mountain will be their saviour. In fact with the help

of 'giri Gobardhan' Sri Krisna saved them from the anger of Indra, who wanted to perish Gokula by his rain and thunder.

To a humanist Krisna is not the 'asraya', but to him the path shown by Krisna, the path of love, action and knowledge could be the ultimate repose for the dangling man for ages to come *the Bhagavata* is the bright book of his deed. Its message clear : Oh man, you will never get anywhere, not in this world, nor in heaven, if you don't work."



THE BHAGAVATA—ITS IMPACT ON TELUGU LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

Dr. V. Kutamba Sastry

It is a well known fact that the two national stories, the story of Sri Rama and Sri Krisna—notwithstanding whether they .are historical or not eversince they are told by Valmiki and Vyasa, have exerted a tremendous influence on every type of literature in Sanskrit and other Indian languages, fine arts, architecture and painting. Obviously thay have struk deep roots in the very life of the nation. These two national stories serve the potential background for the activities strating from the simple folk songs sung by the farmers in fields during plantation and thrashing, and going upto the subtle literary master pieces of high admiration.

The contrast between *Ramakatha* and *Krsna Katha* is well known. *Ramakatha* is simple, practical and more appealing to general human nature. *Krsna Katha* on the other hand is complex, highly philosophical and very difficult to understand.

Because of this peculiarity of *Krsna Katha*, Vyasa has composed *Srimad Bhagavata* separately not being satisfied by composition of *the Mahabharata.* The many sided personality of Sri Krisna could not have been developed in *The Mahabharata*

The Krisnalila is the sweetest part of the *Bhagavatam*.. Tha Rasa lila is so enthralling that it proved

the basis for the philosophical theories of Sri Vallabha-charya. Sri Krisna-chaitanya Mahaprabhu and many saints who followed the theory of *Madhura Bhakti.*

It is Bhagavatam that gave solace to Sriman Vyasa, who composed 18 Mahapuranas. It is *Bhagavata* that could quench the unsatiated thirst of telling the story of Punyasloka. It is rightly told in *Padma Purana* that *Vyasa Bhagavana*, having started writing Purana's with the Padma first has composed other sixteen Puranas. And then he having collected the essence of all seventeen Puranas, composed the Bhagavatam in the end and taught it to Sri Suka himself.

It is univearsally agreed that the saying Vidya-vatam Bhagavate pariksa is a statement of fact. Unlike other Puranas, the style and content of Bhagavatam can not be easily digestible. The style is poetic and in many places, it is Narikelapaka too. Content more over is full of deep philosophical ideas. The Bhaga-vatam is an attempt to synthesise the teachings of Vedas and Upanisads especially so of Karma, Bhakti and Jnana the three seemingly contradictory Upayas or means to attain Moksa.

The usual, traditional explanation of the term Bhagavatam, bha standing for bhakti, ga far jnana, va for Vairagya, ta for tattva and ma for moksa—explains the concept that salvation is attained by the realisation of the ultimate reality as a result of the three consti-tuents : devotion, wisdom, and renunciation. This is explained in the following terms—

Bhakti jnana vairagyaih tattvadhigamal moksa

Various commentators of the *Bhagavata* took various stands to decide about the Tatparya of *Bhaga-*

vata, Sridharacharya showed his preference to explain *Bhagavata* as having tatparya in Advaita Vedanta or the monistic interpretation. Viraraghava preferred Visistadvaita to Advaita as the significance of *Bhagavata*. Many scholars tried to explain *Bhagavata* variously.

The translation of such a work in native languages poses fresh difficulties. It is a stupendous and challenging task, indeed. This is because of the fact that the *Bhagavata*, as shown above, is cemplex. *Bhagavata* is an one hand a master-piece of poetry, and on the other para vidya, a great philosophy.

The key to open the treasure-house was given by Sampradayika, saying bhaktya Bhagavatam jneyam na vyutpatva na tikaya. The Bhagavatam can be understood only by means of devotion to it and not by scholarship or commentary.

Bhakta Potanamatya was a great Bhakta and Sahajakavipandita. By the Punya of his and his forefathers he got the right key to open the treasure-house of Bhagavatam. Words are not capable of describing the beauty of the Telugu Bhagavatam written by Bhakta Potana.

It is not mere translation. It is much more than it. I get only two more examples to cite which had enjoyed popularity more than the original like Telugu Bhagavatam. The one is translations of *Ramayana* by Sant Tulasidas and translation of *Bhagavadgita* by Sant Jnaneswar.

Telugu translation of *Bhagavata* by Potana enjoys equal popularity with the translation of *Maha Bharata*

made by trinity of Poets—*Nannayya*, *Bhattaraka*, *Tikkana Somayaji* and *Yarrapragada*, within the Telugu literature.

After Potana's first translation of *Srimad Bhagavata* into Telugu a number of Kavyas based on Potana's Bhagavatam have been composed by many writers. Potana's influence on later works is conspicuous.

I shall first try to give a list of Kavyas that have been written in Telugu based on Samskrit *Bhagavata* and Telugu *Bhagavata* or on both. After making a rough survey of *Bhagavata* literature I would like to comment on Andhra Bhagavatam.

Dvipada is a metre like Doha which is more or less runlines with antyaprasa unavoidable. This meter is not to be used in Prabandhas and other types of classical poetry. This is specially meant for folk-literature and to do Nityapareyana.

In this Dvipada metre, there are more than four translations of the *Bhagavata* available to us, which proves the popularity of the *Bhagavata*.

1. Madiki Singana (1420 A. D.)
2. Doneru Konerunatha Kavi (1547 A. D.)
3. Tekumalla Rangasayi (18th Century A. D.)
   Tarikoda Vengamamba

All of them translated Bhagavatam in Telugu in D[illegible]da metre,

[illegible] addition some poets translated one or two [illegible] the *Bhagavata* and some others translated [illegible]tions of *Bhagavata*, like Rukmini Kalyanam

and so on, all in Dvipada. A large number of such works are available. Some instances are cited as under :

1. Gopalakavi (1650 A. D.) 10th Skandha alone.
2. Tallapaka Chinnanna (1550 A. D.) *Astamahisi Kalyanam*.
3. Tallakaka Tiruvengalanathudu *Usa Kalyanam*.
4. Loke Rao Somana B*alabhadra Vijayam*

So many translations in Dvipada metre explain the popularity of *the* B*hagavata* in Andhra Desa.

Among translations in other than Dvipada metre some very popular and standard translations are mentioned below :

1. Potana, Singana and Naraya (1450 A. D.) together translated *the* B*hagavata* into Telugu and named it as *Srimad Andhra Maha* B*hagavatam*.
2. Sripada Krisna Murty Sastri (19th Century A. D.) wrote *Sri Krsna* B*hagavatam*.
3. Sri Rama Nrsimha Kavulu made another translation.
4. Bulusu Venkateswarlu wrote the translation of *the* B*hagavata* into Telugn without prose.

In addition some poets translated one or more Skandhas :

1. Madiki Singana—10th Skandha
2. Aluri Kappana—10th Skandha (Yakshaganam)
3. Bopparaju Gangana—5th Skandha

4. Erchuri Singana—6th Skandha

5. Veligandula Narayan—11th and 12th Skandhas

6. Hari Bhattar—6th, 11th and 12th Skandhas

7. Ravuri Sanjiva Raju—11th and 12th Skandhas

8. Kovuri Pattabhirama Sarma—11th Skandha

9. Minnikanti Gurunatha Sharma—11th and 12th Skandhas.

Apart from these metrical translations,

1. Madiraju Laxminrsimha Kavi wrote '*Geya Maha Bhagavatam*' —(*the Bhagavatam* in songs.)

2. Dodla Venkatarami Reddy of Kavali compoaed *the Bhagavata* in lucid Telugu prose.

3. Puripanda Appala Swamy wrote a translation of *the Bhagavata* in Telugu prose.

All these and other works stand to prove the continued tradition of the Bhagavat Sampradaya in Andhra Desa.

Most of these writers, wno came later than Potana have shown their indebtedness to Potana who, obviously did exert profound influence on their renderings.

One, who has a thorough knowledge of Telugu, can compare Potana's work with Sanskrit original in order that the greatness of the translation might be realised.

The very first sloka of *the Bhagavata* with the Gayatri Motive *Satyam param dhimahi* embeccded in it,

cannot be exactly translated into the native languages. Commentators wrote pages after pages on the Sastraic and Philosophical substance put in it in a nutshell. But Potana rendered this sloka with ease and remained true to the original.

Potana translates word to word the original text in many places. To cite few instances :

Sanskrit	Telugu
1—2.24	1—60
7—4,33	7—116
4—7, 13,14	4—159, 160
10—13, 55, 56	10—540
7—2, 20, 21	7—38

In some places where the original sloka in *the Bhagavata* is not clear because of brevity or Sastraic content, Potana took sentences of Sridhara's commentary and made poems with those very sentences set in them. To cite an instance—

In the sloka 1.23 the word *adhyatma dipam* is explained by Sridharacharya as the light or *Prakasa* that illumines *adhyatma* which is explained as *Karyakarana sanghata* which means body and senses. Potana while translating 1.23 starts his poem with the definition of the word *adhyatma* and proceeds literally in the same way as of Sridharacharya's definition.

Potana forgets himself and introduces images into description and elaboration whenever he gets an opportunity to deal with the concept of Bhakti. In the sections on Gajendra Moksha, Prahladacharitam, Rukmini Kalya-

nam and Gopika Gitam concepts of *Bhakti* and *Krsna-tattva* are elaborately described in proportion 1.5 to 10 slokas. The net result of such elaboration is that the translation is richer by about 8000 to 10000 slokas.

Such pieces of poetry stand as master-pieces for all ages to come and enjoy mass-populartiy.

The excellence of poetic beauty and dramatic narration remain unparallel in Potana's translation especially in such places as Gajendramoksham, Prahllad charitam, Dhrvopakhyana, Rantideva Charitam, Vamana-vataram, Rukmini Kalyanam, Balalilas of Sri Krisna, Gopika Vastrapaharana and Gopika Gitam.

The secret of Potana's success in poetic excellence lies in his *sakti* for which he is aptly called "Sahaja Kavipandita;" in his ability to select and use the right words having the rignt musical qualities the right context.

He showed his pure devotion, as well as spontaneous mastery over Prasadaguna.

His work revealed the depth and love for the self-realisation *Aparoksanubhuti* sweetness *madhurya* of the story of Sri Krisna.

His prose resembles the style of the *Kadambari* of Banabhatta with slesa, virodhabhasa, and utpreksa as common features. His skill in dramatisation, and picturesque description runs parallel to that of Kalidasa as seen in Vamanavatara and Rukmini Kalyanam.

Even while translating a *Purana* into a native language, Potana utilises the opportunity to depict the

local habits, local foods like Magaya, local sports and local dress and other artefacts of culture inclusive of the local maxims. This resulted in his high popularity, vis-a-vis Nannayya, Tikkanna and the contemporary writer Srinatha.

The impact of the Telugu *Bhagavatam* on the people of Andhra is such that this single work established a fellowship among all of them.

We often hear of the *Bhagavata Saptahams* and *Ekahams* which are frequently conducted throughout the length and breadth of the land. We see during this period a tight schedule of programmes of action consisting of the Bhajan and Parayana of *the Bhagavatam*, discourses on it, and staging dramatic themes based on the c lebrated work.

On the Janmastmi day, Narakachaturdasi and other festivals the Andhrites prefer to read the select chapters from the Telugu *Bhagavatam*. Many of the important chapters of this work were usually learnt by heart by elderly people, and they enjoy reciting or reading them for the beauty of the poetry and the philosophical ideas contained in them.

Siddendra Yogi, the originator of the famcus Kuchipudi Classical dance of Anohra desa wrote all his dance dramas based on *the Bhagavata* only.

Ksetrayya, representing the classical Telugu trinity of Padakavis wrote all his pada poetry based on *the Bhagavata*. Mixed with the element of fine Srngara these padams are extremely popular among men of all walks of life. Until the beginning of this century these

padams provided melodious songs for the Devadasis to dance on.

Telugu songs based on *the Bhagavatam* are made use of in Kolatam, a folk and village sport with sticks and threads and in the Harikatha, special type of musical discourse in south India, where the preacher, styled as a Bhagavatar takes special themes from *the Bhagavatam* and gives a lecture accompanied by songs and the musical instruments such as voilin, or harmonium, and mrdangam.

The Sampradaya of *the* B*hagavata* is continuously effulging the Andhra Desa and its impact went to the deep roots of Telugu Society.



TWO ORIYA INTERPRETERS OF THE SANSKRIT *BHAGAVATA PURANAM*

Dr. Ketaki Nayak

The *Bhagavata Puranam* is the quintessence of all the Vedas as referred by the Purana itself. It is the sum and substances of all the Upanisads (Vedanta) which are the culmination of the Vedas and has been charactersied as the oneness of Brahman (The Absolute) and the individual soul and has detachment of the spirit from matter as its only object. A man satiated with its nectarine flavour will not find delight anywhere else. It is the indicator of the mysticism of the Mahabharata (Smrti), a commentary of the Brahmasutra. Therefore Prasthantrayee (Srti Prasthna-Vedanta Versus Upanisad, Smrti Prasthana and Brahmasutra Prasthana) are all included in the *Bhagavata Puranam* to elucidate Brahma and therefore it is called *Puranam Brahmasammitam*". This Puranam begins with the Brahmasutra "*Janmadyasya Yatah* (1.1.2—*Br. Sutra*) and the thoughts of the Br. Sutra are elucidated here. According to Vallabhacharya the eighteen chapters of the *Bhagavata Geeta* are explained in 18000 slokas of the Bh. P. Therefore this Puranam is called Vedantasaras.

The oldest commentary now available is Sridhara Swami's *Bhavartha Depika* which followed the Advaita School of Shankar.[1] Sridhar Swami acknowledges that in his commentary he has given the traditional interpretation implying Chit Sukhas Commetary on Br. *Puranam*,

Swami's Commentary is authoritative, lucid in style and to the point. He, scholars say is next to Vyasa (the author of this Puranam), and Suka, its narrators. It is Sridhar Swami who understood the real purpose of this Puranam.

Navadasji said that Lord Bindu Madhav of Kasi approved Sridhara's commentary as the authentic one[2]. Jiva Goswami admits his authority by urging that his explanations are just to elucdate and supplement Sridhara's commentary. Lord Chaitanya paid deep reverence to Sridharswami. Later commentators follow more or less his commentary. ThatSridharswami is a follower of Shankar's nondualism can be evinced from his inter pretation on the first verse of *the Bhagavata Puranam* (1.1.1.).

According to Advaita Vedanta, the Supreme spirit or reality is both immanent and transcendent. The universe originates from the supreme spirit. During this world process the supreme spirit is eternally established in its original grandeur, the world process being traceable to cosmic illusion. He interprets the verse as follows :

Let us meditate on the Supreme Lord who is real; in whom (that is depending on whom) the creation of the three attributes of the cosmic illusion (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas) though unreal appears to be real, just like the transmutations of fire, water and earth (e. g. mirage where-in water, though non-existence appears to exist in the blazing heat and light of the sun). In Him, this three-fold creation is unreal. By His own lustre, He has dispelled delusion; let us meditate on Him, from, Whom is the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe as can be inferred by logical con-committance

and variance, Or (ii) The supreme being is the cause and the universe the effet, He, being the cause, is in all things and is different as the things and effects.

Or, (iii) This universe being composed of parts, its creation etc. is due to Him as can be deduced from positive and nagative proofs, but He should be distinguished from Prakrti as he is self-effulgent and Omniscient.

So neither Prakrti nor Jiva is worth mentioning. Nor so is God Brahma, because the Supreme being revealed the Vedas to Brahma first sage, since the learned ones are perplexed about the Vedas. The word Dhimahi in this verse proves that this Puranam with the science of the Supreme Being is Brahma Vijnana. He quotes from Matsya Puranam which equates this verse with the secred Gayatri Mantras (R. V. 3.62.3 and occurring in other Vedas). From the above interpretation we may conclude that Sridharswami is an Advaita Vedantist. As from Shankar's monism followed other philosophy on Vedanta such as specific monism, dualistic monism, pure monism, etc. so also from Sridhara's commentary other commentaries came into light in non-dual pure, dualistic and dual and and non-dualistic monism. The commentaries Suka Sagar, Bijayadwaja, Sarartha—Darshini and Bhagavata Sara were made implicating the philosophy of Dwaita, Dwaitadwaita, Suddha-Dwaita as well as Achintya Bhedabheda Vada.

Sridharaswami's Adwaita Vada with Bhakti befits with the main purport of *Bhagavata* Purana such as Brahma jnana added with Bhakti and Vairagya has only subject as Naiskarmya. In Advaita monism jnana is placed to the highest level. But Upasana and Karma are blended with the purport of Brahmajnana. Niskama Karma and Upasana are means to attain Brahma jnana.

Once Brahma Jnana is attained the Upasana and the Karmakanda disappear being merged in Supreme Knowledge. Therefore, Shankaracharya has admitted Upasana as a step for the realisation of identity between the individual soul and the universal soul. He himself has composed numerous hymns adoring Shiva, Durga, Ganesh, Visnu etc. He has also composed Govindastaka, Aratatrana, Narayana strotram and in Probodha Sudhakar, he has described several glorious pastimes of Lord Sri Krisna.

At the same while the Supreme Reality and its realisation remains unruffled. As the maxim says, "Sadhakanam'' hi hitarthaya Brahmanah Rupakalpana (form of the formless Brahmas is to be imagined for the benefit of the Sadhakas). Therefore, in course of time Bhakti cult entered into the Adwaita Vedanta philosophy. That is why Chitsukhacarya, the greatest protector of Adwaita Vedanta attempted to write commentary on *Bhagavata* Puranam and Visnu Puranam to save this philosophy [from the clutches of the critics from Dwaita and Visista Dwaita philosophers as referred in the Tika of Madhwacharya and Vijayadwaja Tika. The date of Chita Sukha is 13th century A. D.. After Chit Sukha Sridharswami made commentary on the *Bhagavata Geeta* (Sobodhini Tika), Visnu Puranam (Atamaprakasini Tika), *Bhagavata* Puranam (Bhabaratha Deepika Tika). In the Mangalacharan of commentary on Vishnu Purana he refers also the name of the Chitasukhacraya with due modesty and says that he follows his track while writing the commentary. So also he refers the same in his Tika on Bh. P. following the sampradaya. Due to monistic attitude towards the Ultimate Reality, he has not mentioned the name of Radha in his commentary and following his path Atibadi Jagannath Das also

has not mentioned the name of Radha in Oriya *Bhagavata.*

A great deal of discussion has been made regarding the personal life and date of Sridharswami Dr. Farquahar in his *Out line of religious literature of India* has told that Sridharswami was an ascetic in the Adwaita monism of Shankar and he was the Mahanta of Gobardhan Math at Puri and his commentary on Bh. P. han been famous all over in The India.

Since the Swami has mentioned the name of Bopdeva saying that Bh. P. was never composed by the latter so he must be posterior to Vopdeva. Date of Vopdeva is 1300 A. D.. At the end of the 15th century A. D. Sridhara's commentary became famous through out India. Therefore, Dr. Farquahar has placed him at about 1400 A. D.. Dr. S. K. Dey, followed Dr. Farquhar to some extent, but he places Swami in 1300 A. D., he further added that Madhabendra Puri and his disciple were Shankarite Sanyasins like Sridhar swami. According to him Sridhar swami attempted to compare Advaita teachings of Shankar with the emotionalism of Bhakti and therefore, he reconciles jnana and Bhakti. So in latter periods some Sanyasins were inspired to lay foundation of Vaishnaba Bhakti movement on the ultimate basic of *Srimad Bhagavata Purana.* Krushna Das Kabiraj (1615 A. D.) mentions the influences of Sridharswamis' commentary on Lord Chaitanya.

Sri Paramananda Acharya proves that Sridhar Swami belongs to the village Maraigan, very near Remuna famous for Khirochora Gopinath, and the Swami was much influenced with devotional thoughts from the Atharvavedin Brahmanas of Paippalada branch who are

still residing in the neighbouring villages of Remuna. So Acharya opines that Pappalada Sakha of A. V. is the sourse of Gopal Tapini and Srikrushna Tapini which are the basis of the Vaishnavism.

Sundarananda Bidyabinoda tries to prove Sridhara's date lying about 1300 A. D.. But with much pain he proves that Sridhar belongs to Bengal and M. C. Naya Ratna to be the 14th desendant of Sriswami. He refuted the views that Swami was not Mathadhisa of Gobardhan Matha for the fact that the Mahanta of the Gobardhan Matha was conferred with the title Aranaya. He wrote commentary on Krisna Purana at Kashi eulogising Bindumadhava, Ganga, Bisveswar. Though a monist he has rectified including Bhakti in it and his Guru was Some Parmananda, the deity is God Nrusingha devoted by nim. He is the founder of Achintya Vedavedavada.

To this view of the learned preceptor a few lines are said below as a conclusion that Sridharswami is an A. Vedantist, a devotee of Nrusingh and worshiper of Lord Jagannath of Puri. He was also Mathadhisa of Puri Gobardhan Math, he was entitled with the title of Aranya also :

From the Mangalacharan of the Commentary of Bh. P. it is evinced that he was a devotee to Nrusingha.[4] And this verse in a little altered form is quoted severa times in other places of Bh. P. Commentary. He alsc bowsdown to Lord Jagannath in several verses of his commentary.

In Orissa people identified Lord Jagannath with Lord Nrusingh because these are the two incarnations of the Same Lord Vishnu, the protector of the universe.

The people of Orissa have worshipped Lord Jagannath who is identical with Lord Nrusingha. In Orissa the worship of Nrusingha also prevailed since 12th century A. D.. Numerous sculptures of Nrusingha are to be found in various places of Orissa. Temples of Nrusingha are scattered here and there in Orissa. Lord Jagannatha at Puri is adorned with Nrusingha Vesa (form of Nrusingha), on the 13th day of the bright fortnight in the month of Kartika. Besides the worship of Lord Nrusingha is mixed with worship of Lord Jagannatha. It is said that Sri Jagannatha during the Car festival visits the Gundicha temple to meet Lord Nrusingha there. Because the tradition says that there the images of Lord Jagannatha, Balarama and Subhadra were formed King Indradyumna installed them in the temple with recitation of Nrushingha mantra and Pithapratistha of Lord Jagannatha was made, out of Nrushingha Sakti. The images of Jagannatha, Subhadra and Balarama are made of logs of nimba tree. During the time of cutting the wood a homa is performed and ablutions are offered with Mantras of Nrusingha

Sri Sankaracharya also composed one hymn, "Samkasta nasana Laxmi Nrisingha strotram" which is very popular among Orissan people. On Nrusingha Tapaniyopahisata verse from RigVeda Sri Vidyaranya Muni an ascetic of Advaita Vedanta wrote a commentary. In the interpretation of the Vedic Mantra Lord Jagannatha is said to be the lion of Mountain Nila (Niladri Kesari). The etymological meaning of Nrushingha is the destoryer of Avidya (Absence of knowledge) or giver of self knowledge. Since Advaita Vedantists traditionally worshipped Lord Nrusingha, Sridhara Swami has paid tribute to Nrusingha or Lord Jagannatha also.

With deep reverence he makes obeissance to Lord Jagannatha, the presiding deity of Srikhetra; in his commentary of the verse of Bh. P. X. 87.22.

Twyatmani Jagannatha manmano ramatamiha.
Kada mamedrisama Janma. manusam sambhavisyati.

(Oh Lord Jagannatha thou art my soul and may my mind be ever rejoined and rejoiced with you. When I can, obtain human birth again to remain absorbed with you.)

In several places of the commentary on the *Bhagavata* especially the Benedictory verse he has bowed down, to Paramananda Madhava (The spouses of Laxmi, He is the Supreme Bliss). In Orissa Lord Jagannatha is familiar as Madhaab (Lord of mother Laksmi).

In the 1st Benedictory verse of Visnu Purana Sri Swami prays to Vindu Madhab of Kasi saying him Parmananda Bigraham who is the Supreme bliss incarnated. In other places he devotes to fhe same Supreme Bliss in the form, of Nandas son (i. e.) Lord Krishna. (Nanda nandanam Paramanandam).

In the introductory verses he has said :

Mukam Karoti vachalam pangum langhayte girim.
Yat Kripa tamaham Vande paramananda Mhahabam.

So Sundarananda's argument that one paramananda Madhab was this perceptor is overthrown hereby.

Ativadi Jagannath Das a devotee Vaisnava philosopher of Orissa in the 16th century A. D. wrote *Bhagavata Purana*, in Oriya language and that he was fully influenced by Sridhar Swami's Advaita philosophy

can be traced out through the internal evidences of his book, The Orissa Vaisnava Dharma founded by him on the basis of Jnanmisra Bhakti, has its sole origin from Sridhara's commentary on V. P. Bh. P. and *the Bhagavata.* The devotee poet invokes the Supreme Lord in the beginning of the 1st chapter of XI Skandha.

Namain Nrushinga charana Anadi Parama Karana.

Following Sridhar Swami he pas his devotion to Lord Ganesh in the beginning of the 1st chapter of 10th Skandha (Bh. P.) and hopes that through the grace of Lord Ganesh, he can relate the lifestory of Lord Srikrishna in the 10th Skandha of Bh. P.

As a commentator Swami has shown his skill in many ways. The distinctive characteristies of his commentatary are that the Swami first relates the summary of topics of each Skandha discussed in its several chapters. In the beginning of each chapter he gives a brief note of the chapter. He too gives an analytical concordance of previous chapters with the new chapter. Sometimes he quotes from the Vedas, upanisads and philosophical texts for the support of views in the commentary.

That Jagannath Das has previously gone through all these notable commentaries of Swami afterwhich he composed the Oriya Bh. Purana can be evinced from his close following of Sridhara's Commentary on the *Bhagavata Purana.* In the 4th Skandha, he has narrated Dhruva's episode in accordance with the Vishnu Purana Dhruva's penance and austerities are vividly described showing the line of Sadhana for god realisation. Jagannath Das was much influenced. by Sridhar's comme-

ntary upon it, he adopted Dhruva's episode only from V. Purana. Following Sridhar's line he has also not mentioned the name of Radha in the 10th Skandha.

Regarding the translation made by Sri Jagannath Das of the *Bhagavata Purana*, one asks: Is it a word to word translation of Bh. P., or is it an annotation, or has Sri Das only briefly narrated the purport of each verse? Unlike Khadanga *Bhagavata* we cannot find out word to word translation in Jagannatha Das's *Bhagavata* in Oriya. Sometimes the annotation is lengthy, sometimes very brief and sometimes translation is properly made. Therefore editors like R. K. Das and others were led to think that due to the mistake of the lipikaras (copists) such kind of defects are found with Bh. Purana. They may be correct to some extent. But one clue has been found in the last portion of the 13th chapter of 12th Skandha. The author of the 12th Skandha is one Mahadeva Das. He says that J. Dash attented heaven after describing Srikrishna's attainment of Vaikuntha :

Swami Sangate Jagannath
Calile Golaka Ye Path

There fore he (Mahadeva Das) is completing now the rest unfinished work. There are heaven and hell difference between the styles of two portions of Oriya *Bhagavata* Purana (One portion I—XI Skandha and XII Skandha of the purana. Sri Mahadev Das is telling us in the 13th chapter of the 12th Skandha that in Orissa two kinds of explanations of the Bh. P. are found. (i) Explanation in Sanskrit written by Sridhara Swami (ii) the other written in Oriya by Jagannatha Dash.

So we have every reason to admit that ta the time of Jagannatha Das's advent, Sridharswami's commentary Bhabartha Deepika had been famous all over India and particularly in Orissa, his own birth place.

Both the Sanskrit *Bhagavata Purana* and Sridharswami's commentary were unintelligible to the common masses of Orissa, being written in Sanskrit. That is why Sri Jagannatha Das endeavoured to present the Purana before the folks of Orissa in his simple mother tounge. But the question arises what method did he follow in interpreting the *Bhagavata Purana*? Since Sridharswami's commentary was popular in those days, he might have been influenced by it and while explaining the *Bhagavata Purana* in Oriya he has followed the line of Sridharswami's. Internal evidences from the Oriya *Bhagavata Purana* are strengthening this view. So a few examples are given below :

A. In most of the translations are made in accordance with Sridharswami's commentary—Bh. P. 1. 1. (1. 2. 3.) verses, in accordance with Sridharswami's commentary for example XI, 10th XI, 11th chapters Adhyaya X.87—the philosophy of Brahma. (Comparative study of J. N. Das & Sridharswami commentary may be made here) III. 25—28 the chapter Kapiladevaitisambada; tha 1st 3 verses of the Bh. P. X.29—X. 31 Gopi Geeta.

B. Like Sridharswami, J. N. Das also surrenders to God with great devation and pays obcisance to the Lord of the end of the most of the chapters. Please see the last portion of X.87 and XI.8—With sincere modesty he says at the end :

Volanti Vipra Jagannatha, yete kahile avadhuta,
Sri ekadasaa Bhagavate, Gite kahile Jana hite.
Alapa hina vuddhi mora, Enu ajnana mun pamar
Na jani Samudara gati, haste manteili mudha mati
Sevai Sujana payara, Edosa ksama kara mora.
Sujana mora pranavandhu! Enu tarivibhavasindhu

(End of the chapter XI.8, Oriya *Bhagavata* of J. N. Das)

(II) He becomes overwhelmed with fervant devotion and his mind is plunged deep in Srikrisna's lila when he says :—16th Skandha—29th Chapter Sanskrit *Bhagavata* (Oriya 30th Chapter—10th Skandha—on the disappearance of Lord Krisna) :

Volai dasa Jagannatha, Vane nirupi Krisna patha,
Mohara mana godaila, Krisna bheta na paila
Vahudi hoila nirasa, Sujane Vrindavan pasa
Mun ava harinki anai, kahun paivi Bhavagrahi-
Pamara hina mora vudhi, Krisna charan citta khedi
Mo chara paivain kahin, Jahar adi anta nahin.
Enu sujana kara hite, Kahai Dasa Jagannathe.
Sedaya maya Hari pada, Mana mo rahu apramade.

Sridharswami's only gives a Singh verse at the end of 29th Chapter ;—

Brahmadijaya Samrudhah darpaka darpadarpte
Jayati Sripatih Gopirasamandala mandanah.

In the end of Brahmastutis—X.14 (Oriya X. 15)

Pamara Vipra Jagannath, Gite gaila Bhagavata.
Pandite nadhariva dosa, Hari harita sudha rasa.
Krisna savuri dehe thai, Yahaku yamante vujhai.
Ke kari pariva ta ana, Chittaku saksi Bhagavana.

Mo mana mohite Murari, Purana Gita Artha kari.
Enu mohara jnana nahin, Baluta jnana praya hoi.
Sajane ene mana dele, Krisna bhetiva tambhe bhave.

In these stanzas the full modesty of the author is exposed while explaining the Bh. P. in Oriya and he also begs pardone to all the learned people of there remains any defects. He invokes all the people to wards the devotion of Lord to get ride of the ties of Sansar. At the end of XI.14 Sridharaswami's says.

Iti Sri Paramanande Nrisimha—pada:sat pada,
Vyakarot Sridhara Swami yathamati Brahmastutim.

That Sridhara swami, a bee in the lotus faet of Nrusingha, the Supreme Being has explained the Brahma a stuti (the most difficult one) in according to his consideration, (and this shows Lord Jagannatha Das's verse echoes the verse of Sri Swami) : XI.30 Bh. P. 27-32 (Oriya) Karuna Rash—Dhehatyaga of Sri Krisna :

III. Single verses also follow Sridharswami's commentary e.g. XI.533-34—Skt. Bh. P.

(a) Dhyam sada paribhavaghna mabhistadoham etc.

Oriya—He maha purusa mukunda
Vande to carana ravindar

(b) XI.6.19 :

Vibhvya stada mrta kolho
upasprsanti—Oriya translation acc. to S. comm.

If compared—2 interpretation :— J. N. Das following the Sridharswami's commentary has elaborately explained. therefore—Oh Lord 2 tirthas are capable

to wash away sins from the World—One is flowing from your Lotus feet and the other is the description of your gloriour deeds.

Similarly—XI.6.20— That Goddes Laxmi can not tolerate the Tulasi garland accepted by the Lord on his chest as she thinks to be her rival and it is elaborated.

Therefore we conclude that Sri Jagannath Dash was much influenced by Sridharswami's commentary in translating Oriya *Bhagavata*.

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   Sridharh sakalam vetti Sri Nrusimha prasadatah.
2. Bhakta mala—Chappaya 440.
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4. Vagisa yasya vadane Laksmiryasya ca vaksas
   yasyaste hrdaye Samvit tam Nrsimharuahambhaje
   (Bh. P. 1.1.1)



ORIYA *BHAGAVATA* BY JAGANNATH DAS AND OPPOSITIONS TO IT

Dr. G. N. Dash

The Oriya *Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das is not merely a literal translation of the original Sanskrit *Bhagavata purana*; it is a free translation and at the same time a commentary on the original text in the Oriya verse. Therefore it may be termed as a trans-commentary of the original Sanskrit text. For the commentary part of it Jagannatha Das has heavily depended upon the *Bhagavata Bhavarthadipika* by Sridhara Svami.

The Oriya *Bhagavata* has become immensely popular through the length and breadth of Orissa because of many a reasons one of which is Jagannatha's excellent command over the language. The trans-commentary of the original Sanskrit text has become so popular that at most of the villages of coastal Orissa, Bhagavata Tungis or Bhagavata Gadis, (a separate hut or cottage where a set of this trans-commentary written on palm leaves and some other religious or even quasi-religious works like puranas, jananas etc., are preserved on a bimana or a special seat and worshipped like a deity) are established. These Bhagavata Tungis or Gadis served the purpose of a temple, a library, a club and even a village court. In most of the upper and middle class households especially those belonging to the higher castes, such a set of Oriya *Bhagavata* was a must and without it the family was not considered sufficiently cultured. In such

households it was kept and preserved and worshipped along with the family deity. The people always referred to such sets of *Bhagavata* with reverence as "Bhagavata Gosain". And stanzas from this Oriya version of *Bhagavata* are often quoted like proverbs even by illiterate women folk of Orissa.

Therefore, it may appear a little strange, if somebody claims that there were and are oppositions to this Oriya *Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das in Orissa. But, the fact naraing that there were at least three potential sources of opposition to the Oriya *Bhagavata* in Orissa.

1. The Inter-Sect Opposition

There was a potential source of opposition from the quarters of Hindu sects, other than the Vaisnavas, like Saivas, Saktas, Ganapatyas etc. as *Bhagavata* is a scripture of the Vaisnava sect. But it seems the opposition from these quarters did not materialize at all. The reason for this is not very far to seek. Though at different times of Orissan history the Saivas and Saktas were powerful and influential forces, after the advent of the Cult of Jagannatha, and especially after the emergence of Lord Jagannatha as the *Rastradevata* of Orissa during the Ganga dynasty, their power and influence gradually declined. The Cult of Jagannatha became so influential in course of time that the mere survival of other Hindu sects seemed to be at stake. (For informations regarding the emergence of the Cult of Jagannatha see Mishra, 1971 and Eschmann et al, 1978). As a result the other sects tried their best to co-exist with the cult of Jagannatha instead of opposing it. The approach of the cult of Jagannatha towards these sects, in turn, was quite synthetic and liberal. This led to their gradual incorporation into the cult of Jagannatha. Panigrahi has been able

to show how the shrine of Lingaraja at Bhubaneswar, the most famous of the Saiva shrines of Orissa, has come under the influence of the cult of Jagannath (Panigrahi, 1961, p. 257. ff). And Lord Jagannatha has been identified with Visnu and Krishna since early medieval period. In this circumstance, it was not possible on the parts of other Hindu sects to oppose the trans-commentary of *Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das in Orissa.

2. Intra-Sect Opposition

There was another potential source of opposition from the quarters of different Vaisnva sub-sects especially from Gaudiya Vaisnavas or Caitanyites to which J gannatha Das did not belong.

The Gaudiya Vaisnavas of Orissa were and are reluc- to accept the Oriya *Bhagavata*, which, they argue, is not the "true" or literal translation of the original Sanskrit text. Indeed the *Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das deviates from the original at several places and quite some of these result from its dependence on the commentary by Sridhara Svami. But the opposition of Gaudiya Vaisnavas really centres round only two specific but inter-related cases of deviation from the original Sanskrit text and only one of which can be called so. On the contrary and ironically enough, it is the Gaudiya Vaisnavas who really deviate from the original Sanskrit text in the second instance. In order to make the above position clear both the cases of alleged deviation may be dealt with a little more elaborately. Both the alleged cases of deviation concern the *Rasapancadhyayi* section of the tenth Skandha of *the Bhagavata* and both the cases of alleged deviation are thematically related. It must be made very clear at the very out-set that Jagannatha Das did not always conform to the adhyayas of the original Sanskrit text

while translating the same. As he split the 1st adhyaya of the 10th Skandha into the 1st and 2nd adhyayas the 29th 33rd adhyayas (i. e. *Rasapancadhyaya*) of the original corresponds to the 30th to 34th adhyayas of Jagannatha's translation.

The first case of the alleged deviation concerns the following stanza of the original Sanskrit text :

"tasam tat saubhagyamadam
biksyamananca Kesavah
Prasamaya prasadaya
tatraivantaradhiyata" (X, 29, 48)

The literal translation of the stanza is as follows: "Seeing that they (i. e.) the Gopis are proud and vain because of their association with him, Kesava (i. e. Krsna) in order to crush their pride and vanity and in order to give grace to them vanished at that place." The Gaudiya Vaisnavas accept this literal translation. As for example Bhagavatacarya Raghunatha Das, a contemporary and a devotee of Caitanya (and also a contemporary of Jagannatha Das) who has translated the Sanskrit *Bhagavata* into Bengali under the title, *Sri Krsna Prema Tarangini* has rendered the above mentioned stanza into Bengali as follows :

"tabe gopigane ei kaila ahamkar
amabai punyabati nari nahi ar" (140)
amate adhika dhanya nahi tribhubane
ami sarba saksate bhajila narayane (141)
(X, 29, 47)

dekhiya Gopal bale eta bada darpa;
ama paya goligna kare eda garba, (142)

ekhane khandiba ami garba abhiman
e bol boliya Krsna haila antarddhan 143

(X, 29, 48)

(*Krsna Prema Tarangini*, X, 29 Goswami Press editon, 1960, p. 283).

This Bengali rendering more or less follows the original Sanskrit text. But Jagannatha Das has rendered the above mentioned stanza into Oriya as follows :

"(Krsna ramana rasa pai
gopi bolanti garba bahi
amara praya bhagyabanta
nahi nohichi e jagata
ramilu anadi purusa
ambhare hoile se basa
Krsna bhagata ambha praye
svarge nohibe debatae)
emante mane garba kari
taha janile Narahari
gopinka mana janibare
maya bihile naditire
gopie Brundabati name
thila se Krsna sannidhane
purbe se achi tapa kari
Gobinda tara bhuja dhari
chandile gopinkara mana
Krsna hoile antarddhana"

(*The Bhagabata*, X, 30)

According to Jagannatha Das a gopi named Brundabati, who had made pennance earlier was near Krsna and Govinda holding her arm (in his hand) mesmerized the minds

of the gopis and vanished. It is quite clear that Jagannatha Das, introducing a gopi named Brundabati, has made deviation from the original text which does not mention any particular gopi here, far less a gopi named Brundabati. But later (i. e. in 30th adhyaya) in the same text it has been mentioned that Krsna, when he vanished, took a gopi along with him though the name of this gopi has not been mentioned even there and this point will be discussed in a little more detail shortly. Therefore the deviation made by Jagannatha Das while rendering the above mentioned stanza of the original Sanskrit text into Oriya is minor in nature. The question may of course arise from which source Jagannatha Das got the name Brundabati. More than one Vrndavati are known in Vaisnava literature. But it appears that Jagannatha Das got this name from Vrndavana (or in Oriya, Brundabana) the forest where Krsna was having *Rasakrida*. One must therefore accept that the objection of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas to the Oriya rendering by Jagannatha Das is valid though the deviation in this case seems to be minor in nature if much importance is not attached to the name Brundabati. But this minor deviation will certainly appear as a major deviation if we take into consideration, as Gaudiya Vaisnavas do, the second alleged case of deviation which is inter-related with the first one and which concerns the name of the gopi vanished along with Krsna.

The second case of the alleged deviation concerns the following stanza of the original Sanskrit text :

"anayaradhito nunam Bhagavan Haririsavarah
yan no bihaya Govindah prito yamanya draha"

(X, 30, 28)

When Krsna vanished from the Rasasthala, the gopis while searching him following his foot prints came across the foot marks of another person, obviously of another gopi, who accompanied Krsna. This is the context in which the above mentioned stanza has been written. In this stanza the gopis, after discovering the foot mark of another gopi along with Krsna's foot mark opine, that Govinda (Bhagavana, Hari Isvara) pleased with the worship made by thi gopi (anayaradhito), whose foot-mark had been discovered along with Krsna's, has brought her to this lonely place, or plaee of pleasure leaving them (i. e. the other gopis). But the Gaudiya Vaisnavas discover the name Radha in the expression "anayaradhito". It may be mentioned here that Sridhara Svami did not discover the name Radha in this expression. But Sanatana Gosvami, the most prominent among the six Gaudiya Vaisnava Gosvamis of Vrndavana, in his *Vrhat Vaisnava Tosini* interprets the expression as follows :

> "anaya eva aradhitah aradhyah
> vasikrtah na tu asmabhiranyathasmakametad
> virahatyadyasambhavah radhayati
> aradhayatiti Sri Radheti nama
> karanam ca darsitam" etc.

(Quoted in Choudhuri L. K. Introduction, p. 21)

In his *Sri Sri Krsnalilastava* or *Dasama Caritam*, Sanatana, while summarizing the 30th adhyaya of the Xth Skandha of *Bhagavata* says :

> "Gopi-laksita padabja-laksma-margita-paddhate"
> anyastriyukta padabjacihneksa-gopikartida (271)
> radharadhitaradhesa radhikapranavallabha
> radharamana vande tvam radhikapremanirjita (272)

radha-samnyastasarvasva stristrainagatidarsaka
radhanutapa-sammoha karantarddhana kautuka (273)
sakhiganaptaradhokta tadvismapanacestita
radha sahita-gopastri-muhumargita pahimam (274)

(Goswami Press edition 1959, p. 28)

Jiva Gosvami in his *Laghu Vaisnava Tosini* commentary has also discovered Radha in the same stanza following Sanatana and almost in his (Sanatana's) words as,

"anayeva aradhitah aradhya vasikrtah
natvasmabhih radhayati aradhayatiti
Radheti namakaranam ca darsita."

Bhagavatacarya Raghunath Das in his *Sri Krsna Prema Tarangini* has rendered the stanza into Bengali in the following manner in which Radha also figures :

"suddha bhabe Hari aradhila ei rama
saphal radhika nama dhare purnakama"

(Gosvami Press edition, 1960, p. 285)

A. K. Bandopadhyay in his work quotes a different reading of the same text :

Krsner adhar sudha piye ekakini
saphal Radhika nam janmila bhabini

(See, A. K. Bandopadhyay, 1966, p. 725)

Other Gaudiya Vaisnavas like Visvanath Cakravarti have also followed this tradition. It is quite clear that in this instance the Gaudiya Vaisnavas deviate from the original Sanskrit text.

But Jagannatha Das rendered the stanza into Oriya as follows :

ekete Krsna aradhila
ekante Krsnanku ramila

Here the Oriya rendering closely follows the original Sanskrit text and cannot be really termed as deviation. He has of course taken into consideration the expression "anayaradhita" of this stanza while translating the 48th stanza of the 29th adhyaya of the Sanskrit text into Oriya. "purbe se achi tapa kari" of the 30th adhyaya of the Oriya *Bhagavata* mentioned and quoted earlier.

On the whole Krsna vanished from the Rasasthala along with a gopi though this fact has not been mentioned explicitly in the 29th adhyaya of the original Sanskrit text (corresponding to the 30th adhyaya of the *Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das) and only the 30th adhyaya of the original Sanskrit text makes this explicit. But Jagannatha Das has explicitly mentioned this in the 30th adhyaya corresponding to the 29th adhyaya of the original Sanskrit text. This is not really the cause of controversy. The controversy arises from the fact that though the original Sanskrit text is completely silent about the name of the gopi, Jagannatha Das has named her Brundabati (Or. Vrndavati) whereas the Gaudiya Vaisnavas will prefer to imagine her to be Radha. In other words in this case not only Jagannatha Das but the Gaudiya Vaisnavas have also deviated from the original Sanskrit text. And this is the real reason behind the opposition to the Oriya *Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das from the quarters of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas. Even if Jagannatha Das had made a literal translation and had not mentioned any name following the original Sanskrit text the Gaudiya Vaisnavas would

still have reservations about his work though they might not have rejected it outrightly. While translating the 47th adhyaya of the Xth Skandha which corresponds to the 51st adhyaya of his work, Jagannatha Das again mentions a gopi named Brundabati though the original Sanskrit text does not mention any name. But that is really not the point at issue here.

It should be pointed out here that Sridhara Svami, the celebrated commentetor of the *Bhagavata,* has not mentioned any name Vrndavati or Radha-while commenting on the concerned stanza which is quite significant because Krishnadas Kaviraj, the celebrated biographer of Caitanya, reports that Caitanya held Sridhara Svami's commentary in great reverence and was contemptuous towards the critics of this commentary (*Caitanya Caritamrta,* Antye 7, 99). Then it is really strange that Caitanya's followers, the Gaudiya Vaisnavas, ignoring the commentary by Sridhara Svami discovered Radha from an expression in a stanza of the *Bhagavata* which Sridhara did not do. Further Vallabhacarya in his *Rasapancadhyayi-Subodhini,* commentary on the Rasapancadhyayi section of the *Bhagavata,* also had not been able to discover Radha in the said expression (*Rasapancadhyayi-Sri Subodhini,* 1971, pp. 224-26). But later Vallabha's followers discovered Radha in the same expression of the same stanza as is known from the Varta of Kumbhan Das, a follower of Vallabha (See Barz, 1976, p. 166. See also Barz, p. 91). This is perhaps due to the influence of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas on the Vallabha sect. The followers of Madhva ofcourse do not accept Raspancadhyayi as a true or genuine part of *The Bhagavata* and according to the followers of Nimbarka, Radha was married to Krsna. Therefore their respective position in this regard not only differ from each other but also differ from the

position of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas. In the circumstances it is perhaps not far-fetched to imagine that the discovery of Radha in the "anayaradhito" expression of the 28th stanza of 30th adhyaya of the Xth Skandha of *The Bhagavata* is the sole contribution of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas.

It appears that the opposition to *The Bhagavata* by Jagannathha Das from the quarters of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas was really behind the decision of one Dinabandhu Khadanga, an eighteenth century author, to translate the Sanskrit *Bhagavata* once again into Oriya verse in the same nine-syllabic mangalagujjari metre which was used by Jagannatha Das though the Oriya *Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das was already extremely popular by that time. This only proves that by the eighteenth century the opposition to *The Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das from quarters of Gaudiya Vaisnavas was already there which prompted Dinabandhu Khadanga to translate *the Bhagavata* once again. Most probably the opposition arose even earlier.

Dibakara Das, the seventeenth century biographer of Jagannatha Das, claims that Caitanya himself has appreciated the Oriya rendering of *The Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das in the following lines :

"ehi samaye sri caitanya
sangate gheni sakhagana
bata talena bije kale
purana suni tosa hele"

(*Jagannatha Caritamrta*)

(It must be mentioned here that lately some scholars have started doubting that Dibakara Das in fact has not written the biography of Jagannatha Das, the translator of

The Bhagavata. According to them Jagannatha, whose biography has been written by Dibakara Das is a different Jagannatha who has not translated *The Bhagavata*. But in this paper the conventional opinion has been accepted). This really seems strange in the light of the different positions of Jagannatha Das and Gaudiya Vaisnavas or Caitanyites in regards to Brundabati and Radha. When the Gaudiya Vaisnavas do not accept *The Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das and oppose it because Brundabati has been mentioned there instead of Radha how could Caitanya appreciate it ? And if he appreciated it how could his followers later oppose it ? It may be argued that the positions of Caitanya and his followers are also not always identical as far as the interpretation of *The Bhagavata* is concerned. As for example Caitanya's followers do not always accept Sridhara Svami's commentary on *The Bhagavata* which was held in great esteem by Caitanya himself and they discover Radha in an expression in a stanza (X, 30, 28) of *The Bhagavata* where as Sridhara did not discover Radha in the same expression of the same stanza. Therefore there is nothing strange in Caitanya's appreciation for the Oriya rendering of *The Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das whose position differs from the position of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas. But this argument is not tenable as Jagannatha Das has not followed Sridhara Svami always and especially in this case and has discovered a gopi named Brundabati which Sridhara has not done. The explanation to the reference of Caitanya's appreciation for *The Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das in *Jagannatha Caritamrta* perhaps lies elsewhere.

It appears that by the seventeenth century the opposition to *The Bhagavata* by Jagannath Das from the quarters of Gaudiya Vaisnavas or the followers of Caitanya became strong. This opposition has also been reflected in

Jagannatha Caritamrta. Therefore in order to neutralize this opposition a tradition was created that Caitanya in fact appreciated the Oriya rendering of *The Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das. Dibakara Das either took active part in creating this tradition or only recorded it. The root of another related tradition mentioned in the same biographical work, which claims that the title "Atibadi" has been conferred on Jagannatha Das by Caitanya himself, may be discovered at this attempt to neutralize the opposition from quarters of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas. The roots of some such related mythical tradition attributing super-natural power to Jagannatha Das and recorded in the same biographical work might also be found in this attempt to neutralize the opposition at a later date. The climax of this attitude was reached when Jagannatha Das was interpreted as an incarnation of Radha in the same *Jagannatha Caritamrta* which championed the cause in the same manner as Caitanya was accepted as an incarnation of Krsna.

Because of the already extreme popularity of *The Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das, as a result of its literary success due to its lucidity and simplicity, and also because of the success of the attempts to stem and neutralize the opposition to it from the quarters the Gaudiya Vaisnavas to which *Jagannatha Caritamrta* contributed a lot, this opposition remained confined only to a few pockets of staunch Gaudiya Vaisnavas and the converts.

Bichhanda Charan Pattanayak, editor of the XI Skandha of *The Bhagavata* translated by Dinabandhu Khadanga claims that "Khadanga Padas" or quotes from Khadanga's translation are quite popular. But Khadanga's translation really could not make much headway and mainly remain unknown, and ignored among the people

of Orissa, as Bichhanda-Charan Pattanayak was also at pains to admit.

But inspite of the extreme popularity of *The Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das this opposition has not been completely neutralized and eradicated. The Gaudiya Vaisnavas still oppose it and do not accept it. The printing and publication of *Sri Krsna Prema Tarangini*, the Bengali rendering of the Sanskrit *Bhagavata* by Bhagavatacarya Raghunatha Das, *in Oriya script* can be cited as an evidence of the above claim.

3. The Brahmanic Opposition

There was a third potential source of opposition from the quarters of the Brahmans of Orissa especially of the celebrated sixteen Brahman sasanas or villages situated near about Puri.

The Brahmans used to earn their livelihood by interpreting Sanskrit scriptures especially *The Bhagavata* which was, it seems, quite popular in Orissa to the Oriya speaking people who did not know any Sanskrit. Often they charged exorbitant fees for the services rendered by them (including the interpretation of *The Bhagavata*) taking advantage of people's ignorance of Sanskrit language. But thanks to Jagannatha Das when *The Bhagavata* was made available in Oriya language people became more and more reluctant to pay the Brahmans for their interpretations. Either they themselves could now read it or at least get it read to them by any body just knowing Oriya script. The comprehension was no problem at all. Therefore the monopoly of the Brahmans over the sacred scriptures was seriously threatened as well as the source of their livelihood. So there was

nothing strange in their vehement resistance to the Oriya rendering of *The Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das. They gave it the derogatory title of "teli Bhagavata" (Oilman's Bhagavata) as is known from the tradition. This was really the earliest opposition to *The Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das and it continued through the centuries almost till the present day. If we are to believe Pandit Nilakantha Das this opposition was very much there at the end of the nineteenth century when he was a boy. In his autobiography (section 21) he describes how as a boy he paid a visit to young Gopabandhu at his village, Suando along with Acharya Harihara and Pracharaka Ananta Mishra. When they arrived Gopabandhu was busy in a ritual reading (parayana) of the Oriya *Bhagavata* by Jagannatha Das. After the reading was over rice as *prasada* was offered to the Bhagavata Gosin and after that all of them partook the rice offered. Nilakantha vividly describes how he, being the son of a sasani Brahman, became extremely reluctant to eat rice in this manner especially because the same rice had been offered to the Oriya rendering of *The Bhagavata* which was till then a taboo among the sasani Brhmans of Puri. Perhaps this situation, though very unfortunate, still prevails in some darker pockets of Orissa even to-day.

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INFLUENCE OF THE *BHAGAVATA* ON MAITHILI LITERATURE

Dr. Kishorenath Jha

It can be said that the influence of vaisnavisim in Mithila is very negligible in comparison with the preaching ana spreading of saktism and saivisim since a long time. Here the mother goddess has been consecrated and worshipped as tutelary deity from time immemorial. The Maithili devotee is seen engaged in the cult of saktitantra with such devotion as seen when he is observing the vedic sacrifice zealously. His hnuesitating impulse is perceived in feeding the virgins, sacrifice of goats and also in singing the hymns of Durga (Durga Saptasati). The study of *the Bhagavata* or the recitation of the one thousand names of Visnu (Visnu Sahasranama) is relatively less in use. Likewise the daily worship of Sivalinga in the morning and evening, the observance of Sivaratri and the widespread celebration of the rites in honour of Siva on every fourteenth day of moon's wane are indicative of the greater devotion of the people of Mithila towards Lord Siva. The abundance of Siva temples in comparison with other temples in Mithila is an evidence of the excessive devotion of the people towards Siva. The feeling of the Mithilan society towards Vaisnavism and the Vaisnavites is indifferent and commonplace. Therefore eating of meat and fish is here eulogised. The society of Mithila particularly the Ksatriyas and the Brahmins are so much influenced by Saivism that in marriage ceremonies, they send a huge Sivalinga made of sugar as an auspicious

symbol. If on account of some reason or other this could not be sent the brideside becomes perplexed out of apprehension of disrespect and displeasure.

Notwithstanding some Vaisnava saints make their appearance in Mithila at times. As for example the names of revered Laksminatha Gosain, Rohinidatta Gosain etc. may be mentioned in this connection. The inclination for listening the story of the *Bhagavata* recited in a week is seen among the Mithilans and also the daily worship of Salagrama is being continued by the religious Mithilans, still in these activities the influence neither of Vaisnavism nor of the Vaisnavites in admitted. The original place of manifestation of the saints are not seen. According to their inherent supernatural powers they accomplish their penance wherever they desire and according to their will. Amongst the Smartas Salagrama and Narmadesvara are worshipped along with the Pancadevata. This is generally observed by the Mithilans who are followers of Smarta religion. The story of *The Bhagavata* recitation in a week is both pleasing to the ear and imparting religious merit. Thus the taste of the people is seen in the recitation and hearing of this Purana like the other ones. From this their adherence either towards Vaisnavism or towards Vaisnava sect cannot be concluded. But their excessive devotion and uncommon reverence towards merely the Puranas are manifested. It is apparent that their faith and devotion as found in the Saiva and Sakta religions lack in Vaisnavism The installation of Mahasakti as family deity in their houses, the worship of mother goddess as tuteary deity and the initiation of Saktamantra, the worship of linga for getting rid of the divine calamity, the injunctions for the daily ablution of Siva with the Satarudriya hymns are testimony to the above facts. The famous poet Vidyapati has described the greatness and modes of worship of Siva

and Sakti in his Saiva Sarvasva Sara and Durga Bhakti Tarangini The teachers of Mimamsa and Nyaya—the two specially popular branch of Sci n :e in Mithila—are the devotees of Siva Bhatta Kumarila makes his salutation to Siva, who holds the moon on his forehead, in his Slokavartika thus—

Visuddha jnanadehaya trivedidivyacaksuse
Sreyah praptinimittaya namah Somardhadharine

Likewise Udayana in his famous work Kusumanjali writes-tanme pramanam Sivah. Though the poet cuckoo Vidyapati himself has made a facsimile of *The Bhagavata* which is still available in the library of S. D. Sanskrit University, Darabhanga and has taken Krsna or Radha in support of his amorous Stanzas, still his devotional songs are more pertaining to Siva and Sakti and that Siva was his worshipful deity becomes clear according to internal as well as external evidences. And this is compatible with the civility of the Mithilans. Otherwise the composition and growth of Saivasarvasvasara and the descent of Lord Siva possessing a form and name as their servant wouldnot have been possible. Mithila has its own conviction that in the Kali age Candi and Mahesvara (Siva and Sakti) are more powerful-kalau candimahesvarau.

The image of the society gets reflected in literature. Therefore literature is known as the mirror of society. The depiction of society in Maithili literature is modelled taking Siva and Parvati as symbols. One famous aspect of this literature known as 'nacari' attracts the attention of society towards the evils that are spread in it. The term denotes helplessness And the other aspect is "Mahesvani" in which ecstatic devotion towards Siva becomes manifested by praising the qualities of Siva. There is the holy composition of songs in devotion to Bhagavati.

The songs of Vidyapati and the Vaisnava poet Govinda Daś pertaining to the passionate love of Radha and Krsna are available, whose imitation continued for a long time afterwards. The tradition of composing Vaisnavite devotional songs continued upto Kavi Sekharanath in the first half of the twentieth century. The epic poem 'Krsnajanma' of Manavodha belonging to ancient age and the poem 'Krsna Carita' of Tantranatha Jha of modern times are before us. The more important work which causes to flow the stream of Vaisnavite devotion in Maithili literature is the Radhaviraha of the master poet Madhupa. But on a critical examination it appears that the influence of *The Bhagavata* on these poems is comparatively less while that of the other Puranas are remarkable. The influence of the Brahmavaivarta Purana on Vidyapati's songs is apparent. Though there is some imitation of the theme of *The Bhagavata,* those instances are not worthy of remark. It is natural that if some great and illustrious feeling (bhava) that occur in the same manner in more than one Purana and a wellknown poet describes the same spontaneously on the strength of his imagination, then afterwards the critics probably would remark that it appears to be imitated. Because it is probable that a poet of Vidyapati's stature who has plunged himself in the emotional plane and whose mind is enlightened and purified by Sattvika qualities, may have that reflection of emotion found in *the Bhagavata.* This is the self experienced field of the critic as well as the poet and in this incubation and elucidation hardly find a place. This can be known by experience. It is probable that here in some songs there is the emotional reflex of Maharasa. But though Vidyapati's songs make clear mention of Radha, *The Bhagavata* no where mentions the same and it is reasonable to accept the influence of the Brahmavaivarta on Vidyapati's songs.

Because in 'Rasavivarta' of this purana the love story of Radha and Krsna is clearly depicted.

Most parts of the songs of the erudite Vaisnava poet. Govindadas bear testimony of *The Bhagavata* influence. The poet has indeed made prayers to the Lord by composing amorous stanzas that are employed in melodions worship, for which his songs are named "Srngarabhajanavali, the prayers of love. It would not be out of place to cite some examples in which the theme of *The Bhagavata* is described.

Kancana manigana janu niramaol
ramanimandal majha
majhahi majha maha marakata
Sama Srisyamal nataraja

In these stanzas clear stamp of the influence of *Bhagavata* is seen. These sentiments (bhava) are described in *The Bhagavata* 10. 33. as follows :

tatraramata govindo rasakrida manuvrataih
Striratnairanvitah pritairanyonya vaddhavahubhih

Likewise another verse of 'Srngarabhajanavali is :

nacata syamasamga vrajanari
jalada punja janu tadita latavali angataranga vithari

The stanza of *The Bhagavata* which stands in comparison to the above is :

karnotpalalaka vitamka kapoladharma
vaktrasrjao valayanupuraghasavadyaih

.The opinion current among the scholars about the 'Krsnajanma' of Manavodha is that its theme has been

borrowed from the Harivamsa. The equality of sentiment of *The Bhagavata* is here of secondary importance. But Dr. Visve Svara Misra in his extension lectures, organised by Cetata Samiti, Patna, has clearly established that the first ten cantos of this Mahakavya are based on the tenth book of *The Bhagavata* while the last canto is based on the Harivamsa.

Prof. Tantranath Jha in his Krsna Carita has described mainly the education of Krsna and Balarama in the hermitage of Sandipani. The killing of the demon Pancajana, who abducted the son of the teacher, in the hands of Srikrsna has been described in connection with the theme. Sri Krsna had to run the risk of his life for this. The origin of this plot is found in the tenth Book of *The Bhagavata* (10.47) and the fifth Book of the Visnu Purana.

The description of *The Bhagavat* runs as follows :

atho gurukule Vasamichhantavupajagmatuh
kasyam sandipanim nama hyavantipuravasinani

The story described in the Visnu Purana 5. 21. 19-30 runs like this :

tatah sandipanim kasyamavantipuravasinam
astrartham jagmaturvirau baladeva janardanau

Thus these two above Puranas are recognised as containing the original story of this Kavya. The germ of the story is found in these two Puranas and the poet takes the opportunity his life as a teacher to expand in an embellished manner.

Though the source of the plot of Madhupa's work 'Radhaviraha' is to be found in the Brahmavaivarta Purana,

as the story of passionate Radha is described here in detail, still the sentiments of the beautiful parts of *The Bhagavata* like Rasapancadhyayi, Venugita, Gopigita, Bhramaragita etc. have been imitated here in proper places which becomes natural to be influenced for any poet while composing kavyas on Krsna. In its eighth and ninth cantos the translation of important verses of the Rasapancadhyayi is to be seen, while in the seventeenth canto the reflection of Bhramaragita is profound and in other places the sentiments of Venugita and Gopigita are imitated. It would not be out of place to give some instances from Rasapancadhyayi and Radhaviraha as example of comparison :

Utkantnaka vivasa kyo kantha
khopika upara rakhi
Kajara kalita ekelocana kyo
cala cala jaldi bhakhi

The following verse of *The Bhagavata* speaks of the same import :

parivesayantyastaddhitva
payayantyah sisun payah
susrusantyah patin kasidasnantyo
pasya bhojanam

Thus not only the sentiments of two or four stanzas have been imitated here but the whole of cantos eight and nine intimates the sentiments of Rasapancadhyayi. In this context the following may be noteworthy :

kyo pati pita vandhu sa rokili goli
na apasa bheli
Srigovindapadaravinda makaranda
hrdaya men meli

The parallel lines of *The Bhagavata* are like this :

tah varyamanah patibhih pitrbhirbhratrvandhubhih
govindapahrtatmano na nyavartanta mohitah

This is the state with the mahakavya. Amongst the dramas only the 'Parijataharana' of Sahebramadas bears the clear stamp of *Bhagavata* influence.

Thus we see in the vast mass bulk of Maithili literature only few works have been composed due to the influence of *The Bhagavata*. The source of kavyas are rather the other Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as well as the folk literature. The diversity of the daily activities of people supplies the impulse for writing the modern literature.

Trans : **Sri C. Satapathy**



BHAGAVATA GHARAS IN ORISSA DURING MEDIAEVAL TIMES

Dr. Bana Bihari Shukla

1. *Religious background of the Bhagavata Ghara* :

Religion affects the thought and action of a large section of the mankind. The influence of religion and social life of the people of India can not be ignored. By prohibiting certain activities and restricting others, the injunctions of religion not only regulate man's philosophy of life but also formulate the nature of his economic activities and ideals. For example, in India, China, Japan, Cylon, Burma and Indo-China, the doctrine of Ahimsa of Lord Buddha had made deep-rooted followers. The Hindu society is divided into different castes, to each of which occupation and duties are prescribed by religion. Similarly, the religious life in Orissa has been dominated by the cult of Purusottam Jagannath and centred round the worship of Jagannath whom the people of Orissa regarded as the king of the Kingdom of Orissa[1], the master or the Lord of the King of Orissa[2] and the universe.

It was the flourishing activities of the mediaeval Oriya literature during the periods of 16th, 17th and 18th centuries that associated Lord Jagannath with the Oriya

Nationalism and that Lord Jagannatha was given the most prominent place in Oriya literature. Most of the Mediaeval authors paid their homage to Lord Jagannatha in their work. The Oriya *Bhagavata* of Jagannatha Das prepared the ground for the birth of such a nationalism.

M. M. Chakravarty writes that the "*The Bhagavata Purana* is the most sacred book of the Vaisnavas, their Bible and Koran. The Oriyas are mostly Vaisnavas and hence Oriya *Bhagavata* enjoys an immense popularity"[3] Another factor is that the Sanskrit *Bhagavata* was popular among the Sanskrit knowing Pandits during the age, whereas the uneducated and illiterate villagers could not understand such a language. The third factor is that there was no standard Oriya book to be commonly used by the people in Orissa. The fourth factor is that during that time, Gita Govinda of Jayadeva which described the promiscuous account of Radha with Srikrisna and sixteen thousands of Gopies was very popular and was regarded by the people as their Bible and the Koran.

Purusottam Deva had taken measures that affected the Jagannatha Dharma adversely. He regarded Gita Govinda as the greatest religious book of the Oriyas and had taken steps to write a book "Gita Govinda"[4]. His son Prataprudra Deva had gone a step forward and ordered the Telengana lady dancers to sing the songs of Gita Govinda while dancing in front of God Jagannatha at the time of Arati (offerings). This dancing performances at the time of Arati was becoming a regular phenomenon during Prataprudra Deva. The Maharaja also had restricted the Vaisnavas of Puri not to recite any other religious text than Gita Govinda during offering and prayers[5]

1.1. *Religious Movement in Orissa : Birth of Oriya Nationalism* :

What gave a new turn to the religious movement of the people of Orissa was the preaching of the principles of Gaudiya Cult of Vaisnavism by Lord Chaitanya. Although Maharaja Prataprudra was influenced by the preaching of Lord Chaitanya, he did not give up his ancestral allegiance to Orissan Vaisnavism. The Pancha Sakhas of the mediaeval era also did not like to embrace this religion of Lord Chaitanya and also did not like its flourishing activities in Orissa. Thus the Chaitanya movement indirectly induced the Pancha Sakhas' to highlight the activities of the Orissan Vaisnavism in their worK as a result, they could saue the decaying Jagannath Dharma to a considerable extent. It is a fact to be noted that although Jagannatha Das, the author of the epic 'Oriya *Bhagavata*' was initiated to Vaisnavism by Balarama Das on the direction of Chaitanya and became their discipline yet he did not adopt the principles of Gaudiya Cult of Vaisnavism of Chaitanya. He expounded the philosophy of Orissan Vaisnavism in his work. Thus there was the birth of Oriya *Bhagavata*, the torch bearer of the Jagannath Dharma and Culture.

1.2. *Oriya Bhagavata* : *Its Mass Appealing Qualities* :

Sarala Das had written the Oriya Mahabharata during the reign of Gajapati Kapilendra Deva and used the local language of Jhankada and its surrounding areas because he belonged to that area. He was neither influenced nor guided by the broad outlook of Orissan literarature as a whole. Therefore, the Oriya Mahabharata of Sarala Das did not influence the common people in

Orissa by that time. Jagannatha Das's Oriya *Bhagavata* written in the first part of the 16th century gave a new turn to the growth of the Oriya literature due to its mass appealing qualities. The Oriya *Bhagavata* adopted a meter known as Nabaksari bruta because each line of the poem consisted of nine letters and because of its simplicity became very popular among the common mass[7]. It is indeed, well appreciated and recited even by the tillers in the field, the strangers in the road, and the illiterate common villagers even to-day. They very often quote the wonderful cantoes from the Oriya *Bhagavata* resulted in the birth of Oriya Nationalism. The common people in villages of Orissa who everywhere form the majority learnt that *Bhagavata* is the most sacred books which was within their easy reach. As a result, the people took to the study of vernacular Oriya with uncommon zeal and energy. This is why the art of reading and writing is known to be practised extensively in Orissa[8]. People in every village took interest to copy the Oriya *Bhagavata* on palm leaves in large numbers and worshipped the same by establishing *Bhagavata* Gharas in the villages of Orissa. Thus Jagannatha Das not only saved the Jagannatha Dharma and Jagannatha Culture from the clutches of the Sahajias, but also created feelings of nationalism among the Oriyas that resulted in the establishment of *Bhagavata* Gharas in the villages of mediaeval Orissa.

2. *Origin of the Oriya Bhagavata* :

The information available from the original seat of Atibadi Jagannatha Das i. e. from the Satalahari Matha and from the Bada Odia Matha, Puri, confirms that Jagannatha Das was born at the Kapilesvra Sasana on Bhadra Shukla Astami of 1412 Sakabda

(1490 A. D.).[9] Chaitanya visited Puri in the year 1509 A. D. to offer prayer to Lord Jagannath. He saw Jagannatha Das for the first time under the Kalpabata of Jagannath temple amidst huge gatherings of men and women and he (Jagannatha Das) was reciting the tenth chapter Brahmastuti of *Bhagavata*[10]. He was by that time 19 years old. Thus from this it is very likely that the Oriya *Bhagavata* was completed by Jagannatha Das either towards the last part of the 1509 A. D. or in the first part of 1510 A. D. According to Mayadhara Mansinha, the Oriya *Bhagavata* was completed by Jagannatha Dasa towards the early part of 16th century.[11]

3. *Origin of the Bhagavata Ghara* :

From the Jagannatha temple in the early 16th century, the Oriya *Bhagavata* expanded its boundaries to the interior villages of Orissa. In accordance with the interview with Pandit Sadasiva Ratha Sharma, Research Scholar and Advisor to the famous Jagannatha temple, Puri, the author learns that the first *Bhagavata* Ghara was established at the Satalahari Matha in the heart of Puri town by Atibadi Jagannatha Das in the first part of the 16th century. This *Bhagavata* Ghara was the second seat after the Jagannatha temple from where the message of the Oriya *Bhagavata* was transmitted to the villages. The Oriya *Bhagavata* was written in almost every village on palm leaves by the devotees. The palm leaf manuscripts were worshipped at a solitary place on wooden planks called the '*Bhagavata Gadi*' (the seat of the Oriya *Bhagavata*) inside the *Bhagavata* Ghara (house of worship of Oriya *Bhagavata*) and read out on every evening.[12] From the Jagannatha temple and the Satalahari Matha, Puri, the soothing messages of the Oriya *Bhagavata* spread to villages and every village turned

into a place of reading and discussion of the Oriya Bhagavata—the religious scripture of the Oriyas. Almost every house became a centre of Bhagavata Parayana and in every village there had established a *Bhagavata* Ghara. This place became a centre of attraction for the village people and every evening the villagers assembled there to hear the version of the Oriya B*hagavata*.[13] Dr. Mansinha while giving an account of the mediaeval B*hagavata* Ghara states that 'ever since that great writer saint Jagannatha Das adopted the Sanskrit B*hagavata* into Oriya in the 16th century, it became an household possession with the Oriyas.[14] The impact of this 'religious book', Oriya B*hagavata* on the people of Orissa was so vigorous that they took effective steps in the establishment of B*hagavata* Gharas in the villages of Orissa.

The origin of the mediaeval B*hagavata* Gharas in Orissa, thus,dates back to the early 16th century—the reign of Gajapati Prataprudra Deva (1497 to 1534 A.D.). Its growth is parallel to the Vaisnava moment in Orissa. It was the place where the religious book 'Oriya Bhagavata' was recited in a public place legitimately called as the Bhagavata Ghara. Thus, 16th century may be regarded as the milestone for vigorous religious-cum-social reforms facilitating in the establishment of Bhagavata Gharas in villages of Orissa. In addition to this common place in the village, there were individual houses where Oriya Bhagavata was recited to give guidance in the day to day affairs of the village people. As per available information, it is stated that there were altogether 69,100 Bhagavata Gharas in Orissa before 1803 A. D.

4. *Reform* : *A Comparative Analogy* :

Mediaeval B*hagavata* Ghara served various purposes for the villagers and brought about social order,

political uniformity, religious awakening, cultural unity and economic order among the people. The institution was the greatest of the voluntary social organisations of the State during mediaeval period.

There was also similar reform movement in Assam in the 16th century. According to E. A. Gait, the Vaisnava religion obtained a strong footing in the country in the later part of the 15th century during the of Ahcm king Suhungmung when Sankar Dev (1449—1569) the fountain head of Bhagavati movement in Assam, appeared on the sense.[15] He visited Utkal (the present Orissa) in the 16th century and greatly influenced by the Oriya *Bhagavata* of Atibadi Jagannatha Das and in turn wrote the *Bhagavata Purana* in his Assamee language. He took delight to hear the wonderful cantoes of the Oriya Bhagavata which was recited at the Bhagavata Ghara in Orissa. The activities of the Bhagavata Ghara, thus, not only get confined to Orissa alone but it had expanded its boundaries to Assam by the great Vaisnava Kavi Sankar Dev. He was greatly inspired to establish 'Nama Ghara' in Assam on similar pattern like that of the Bhagavata Ghara of Orissa[16]. Even in the Telengana district of the Andhra Pradesh and in the whole of West Bengal there existed Bhagavata Gharas but with different nomencaltures. According to Majumdar, "There is not a single Hindu village in Orissa where atleast a portion of Jagannatha Das's Bhagavata is not kept and daily recited"[17].

We can also compare the mediaeval Bhagavata Ghara with the society of Jesus, which was founded by Ignatus Layalo in 1534 A. D., was a religious order that also did much to reform. The society founded many schools and colleges and earned high reputation by their

learning, their simple and earnest sermons[18]. Here the greatest work was in the field of missionary activities. They brought back Poland, Baveria, Belgium and large part of what is now Czechoslovakia and Hungery to the catholic faith. Many of them undertook proselyting missions to other parts of the world, notably India, China and North end South America, where they brought large congregations into the field.[19]

The mediaeval Bhagavata Ghara similarly, introduced many reforms in the society and continued their work for three centuries right from the 16th centuries A. D. It took steps for constructive welfare work through its inner committee village Panchayat on various aspects of people's affairs. In addition,

(i) it allowed freedom to practise religion, right to justice and work and served for the social and cultural upliftment of the village people, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex or other privilages.

(ii) it gave weightage to group thinking, regulated measures for smooth village life and made provisions for civic amenities of the village people.

(iii) it worked as a body and fixed responsibilities on individual and groups for any ommission and commission, and

(iv) it gave recognised status to all members of the village community as well as recognised status to its members who were responsible for the over all administration of the village.

5. *Programmes and Services of The Bhagavata Ghara :*

Bhagavata Ghara was such a type of Institution during the period that had played a dominant role in

providing socio-welfare services to the common villagers. The institution through its Committee, village Panchayat earmarked programmes, formulated policies and made plans to implement various activities for the village people. The elders forming the village Panchayat planned the programme in such a way that there was very little overlapping. Even other villagers used to co-operate with the executive members to make the programme of fhe Bhagavata Ghara a grand success. The services covered by the institution were the following :—

(a) Improvement on aesthetic aspect of the village community and their moral power :

(b) Arrangements for daily recitation of the Oriya Bhagavata, the Ramayana, the;Mahabharata or other such religious manuscripts at the Bhagavata Ghara,

(c) Setting of disputes or conflicts of all types of the village community.

(d) Collection of village cess for constructive community work;

(e) Arrangement for community development work such as construction of roads, construction of irrigation canal, digging of wells, tanks etc.

(f) Improvement of the village Chatasali and qualitative general education of the children;

(g) Holding community feasts and local Yatras at certain festive occasions;

(h) Arrangement for holding meetings and conferences;

(i) Provision for Public health and sanitaiion.

6. *Co-ordination of the villagers with the Activities of the Bhagavata Ghara* :

The *Bhagavata* Ghara, the religious-cum-social organisation in mediaeval Orissa had contributed a great deal to the welfare of the common people by co-ordination. but due to the existence of various loose strings in many villages, co-ordination had not been achieved a success and *Bhagavata Ghara* remained an institution in name only. However, the executive members of the institution performed manifold activities by co-ordination in the following fields :

(i) Land disputes.

(ii) Conflicts between the community members which were ordinarily not decided by the village Panchayat and which needed co-ordination of village Panchayats of other villages.

(iii) Co-ordination of one *Bhagavata* Ghara with the other (One Panchayat with other Panchayat) for settling any disputed matters of one village or a group of villages;

(iv) Co-ordination of the institution with the village people for improving standards of services;

(v) Such other services as were necessary when deemed fit;

With regards to the relative roles on social welfare, the author recommends the following criterion which were to be carried on within the competence of the village *Bhagavata* Ghara :

(i) Perceiving the developing needs of the village life propagation was necessary in order to attract the

villagers for the developmental activities in villages;

(ii) To cope with the new services which the authorities of the *Bhagavata* Gharas were slow in recognising steps, were to be taken for realisation of such services and their implementation;

(iii) To experiment with the new techniques in bringing about changes in people's traditional attitude or in organising social ssrvices;

(iv) To undertake services of an adhoc or local nature for the needy sections of the society;

(v) To stimulate public participation and enlisting voluntary assistance for the improvement of social services in villages;

(vi) To enact and enforce legislation on social issues after suitable preparation by the members of the *Bhagavata* Ghara as well as by the willing villagers;

(vii) To implement large scale grants-in-aid programme to the village *Bhagavata* Gharas by the rich villagers as well as religious endowments in supplementing and strengthening rather than substituting or replacing voluntary behaviour;

(viii) Regulation of social services to ensure maximum standards of services and in preventing exploitation;

(ix) To provide services of a costodian-protective nature for the villagers and to promote services of wide range, such as cultural upliftment, education, health, labour protection, social security etc.

(x) To sponsor and promote the widest possible creation of community consiousness and to ensure speedy voluntary action as was necessary for promoting social welfare services on democratic lines; and

(xi) To ensure such services as in the opinion of the executives was necessary for social upliftment of the village people.

The lacuna in its implementation were to be rectified or withdrawn and measures were to be taken for beneficial social welfare services.

7. *Criteria for General Welfare* :

The *Bhagavata* Gharas ensure successful living for the common mass. As nearly 95 percent of the village population during the period belonged to lower income groups, any kind of socio-economic development was not possible without the involvement of a massive programme of rural development. Such a massive programme of village development and a concerted drive to remove rural poverty were carried on by the village *Bhagavata* Ghara on an intensive basis. These also implied a better deal for the common villagers, including the Harijanas and other weaker sections of the community. It is a fact always to be noted that due to lack of resources and paucity of accommodation, it was not possible to run welfare works on certain minimum standards. It was felt that unless efforts made to introduce minimum standards for these welfare institutions, desired development could not be achieved. Improvements in the working of the institution was not possible due to lack of good workers, lack of improved conditions of

work and lack of voluntary efforts. However, in majority of villages, the *Bhagavata* Gharas had ensured marvellous performances in different aspects of the village life by the executive members of the village Panchayat.

8. B*hagavata Ghara* : *The Socio-cultural Centre of The Village People* :

Voluntary work of the *Bhagavata Ghara* spread to different spheres. A large number of temple authorities connected with the B*hagavata* Gharas, tried to help the common mass, the poor, the needy and the destitutes in their distress and they felt that the property of the temple should be utilised for the good of the people and as such the institution B*hagavata* Gharas had opened new vistas and avenues for the service of the mankind. The beneficial work of the institution encouraged the people to establish *Bhagavata* Gharas in villages of Orissa where they did not exist. Next to this category, the philanthropists established *Bhagavata Gharas* in villages to help the unfortunate member of the saciety who suffered very much due to the oppression and exploitation of the greedy money lenders. The third category of the people who contributed to the establishment of the B*hagavata Gharas* was the village community. They realised the importance of this institution as a place of worship, religious teaching and propaganda and devoted their energies for the establishment of B*hagavata Ghara*. Thus, from ethical, religious and social points of view, the villagers established B*hagavata Gharas* which in later years grew in importance and became the centre for the cultural life of the village community.

It played a significant role in the civil administra tion of Orissa with the help of its inner council, Village

Panchayat. It used to mete out social justice, preach religion and morality, resolve disputes and look to the welfare of the common mass. It was thus, an important institution in almost every village in mediaeval Orissa that had highlighted the different aspects of the village life through the devoted work of the villagers. Their role in imbibing the right attitude in persons having public spirit to work for the good of the people and formation of habits to co-operate with one another in doing constructive work is worth mentioning.

In *Bhagavata Ghara* many people assembled almost every evening to listen to the sacred songs of the Oriya *Bhagavata* and to observe common prayer. This kind of gathering gave them opportunities to discuss their own problem and the problems pertaining to village life. As such the institution was indirectly converted into a place of social importance through personal contacts and gave the people enough scope to find out ways and means for their allround development. In later periods, *Bhagavata Ghara* was so important an institution almost in every village that without the services of the *Bhagavata Ghara* there was no institution to look into the affairs of the village people. Besides, *Bhagavata Ghara* served as a charitable institution and cultural centre for them.

Accorging to *Bhagavata Gita*, charity, is valid, if it takes into account, Desh(place), kala (time), and patra (recipient). The forms of charity were Artha (money) vidya (education), and Abhaya (courage). Quite akin to the aforesaid principles the *Bhagavata Ghara* was imparting vidya (education) to the people through the village pathasala (school), distributed charity (Artha) to the poor and the needy villagers out of the village kotha

(revenue of the *Bhagavata Ghara*) and gave Abhaya (courage) through its powerful committee—the village Panchayat.

Kautilya has mentioned in his Arthashastra, that the responsibility to lookafter the poor, the aged, the weak, the distitute etc. was that of the ruler : It is also mentioned there that workshops were established for the destitutes. Arthashastra also refers to the construction work by the villagers, special regulation for village and town life, provisions for civic amenities etc. Similarly during the reign of Prataprudra Deva, there were learned persons in the court of the king to look into the affairs of the common mass. As the earlier kings of the medi-aeval age were more interested in learning and religious affairs of the people than in their social welfare activities the social services to be rendered for the mass were neglected. But the credit of introducing reforms in the society would definitely go to the Gajapati kings because they were the kings who first realized the importance of reform in the Orissan society and acted accordingly. The reform measures were vigorously carried on from the middle of the 16th century with the formation of the village Panchayat as the inner council of the *Bhagavata Ghara*. This Committee took every care of the welfare of its subjects having alliance to the parent body i. e. *Bhagavata Ghara*[20]. The Maratha record mentions about the worship of Thakura (Gods) and that the Government paid money to the persons who were incharge of Thakuras and who are also incharge of religious ceremonies connected with their worship[21].

The joint family system prevailing although the period was a kind of bigger umbrella for the maintenance of the less fortunate members of the family. The respon-

sibility for the care of the orphans, widows, aged and infirm was that of the family and its Karta (Senior most male member in the family). Though the caste system had its wide barriers, yet this religious-cum-social institution catered to the needs of the poor, helpless and other lower caste people in villages. There were many examples of charity given to those sections of the people in the society by the rich villagers as well as by the *Bhagavata Gharas*. The village Panchayat system provided a mechanism to meet the needs of the sick, the handicapped, the aged and the destitute members of the community.

Bhagavata Ghara had its vigorous activities during the whole of the 18th century as is evidenced from the historical survey. Different sources available to the author indicate the spirit of men and women to do good for the benefit of others. The word 'DANAM' used in 'RIGVEDA' refers to the booty captured by the victor in the tribal war. The booty belonged to the community and the same were distributed among all its members. In course of time, the term 'DANAM' did not have merely any social connotations but it began to be considered as a personal duty and virtue. Similarly, during the medieaval period, *Bhagavata* Ghara received personal offerings in shape of land, jewelry etc., which were converted as the property of the institution. *Bhagavata Ghara* through its inner council village Panchayat, utilised this property for the welfare of the village people. The institution thus, took effective measures for the wholesome social reform of the people by uniting them under it.

9. *Political life and Judicial Systems during Bhagavata Ghara Era* :

The pelitical consciousness of the villagers showed

a deep understanding of the Orissan social problems. The village elders combined constructive work with the political programmes of the village Bhagavata Ghara. In fact, political activities and the social work in mediaeval Orissa were the two sides of the community development programme. The members of the Bhagavata Ghara took certain steps to serve the common cause and in order to do so the village Panchayat framed certain guidelines. According to these guidelines loans were to be taken by the Bhagavata Ghara from the rich dwellers of the village and distributed among the needy villagers on very simple interest terms. In any disputes, if any person did not obey the decision of the village panchayat strong actions were taken against him and against the members of his family.

The Maratha record refers to the civil and criminal cases of the period. It mentioned that there was no distinction between the civil and criminal cases. Proceedings were drawn simply and justice thereof was available to the individuals quickly. Punishments were accorded generally by time old customs. A person committing a petty offence of stealing firewood was often given punishment of a small fine.[22] In default of human evidence, the Panchayat sometimes resorted to trial by ordeal like holding a red-hot-iron or putting a hand in boiling Ghee.[23] The accused was brought to a place where the Thakur (God) was situated. The ordeal of ghee was performed in the following wav. Ghee was put to flame, when it was too hot, a ring was placed in it which the accused was to take out in his hand. If his hand did not burn, he was declared not guilty. All the above ordeals were to be performed according to Sastra (Scripture")[24].

From this account it is clearly indicated that there was Panchayat administration in both the rural and urban areas during the whole of the Maratha period. The mention of Thakur refers to God that the people worshipped at a religious place. This place was called the "*Bhagavata Ghara*" or the '*Bhagavata Tungi*'. But the number of Panchayats, its status etc. have not been given anywhere and also there is no mention about the number of Bhagavata Gharas in villages of Orissa. At this institution was functioning as the religious organisation, the Maratha Government being Hindus did not interfere in the affairs of the Bhagavata Ghara.

During the Maratha regime that refers to the Bhagavata Ghara Era in Orissa, the judicial system was simple. There was no codified law and the procedure of settling disputes were not always clear and definite[25]. However, people left to the village Panchayat and cases were disposed off by the Panchayat[26]. It is evident that Bhagavata Ghara during those days acted like judicial courts and inflicted punishments on the culprits. Hence no one in a village could go out of the jurisdiction of this institution. As such, Bhagavata Ghara played important roles in maintaining peace and order in villages through its inner powerful organ Village Panchayat.

10. *Welfare Services of The Bhagavata Ghara Patronised by the Maratha Government* :

Muslim period throws light on Aurangzeb's policy of temple destruction. The temple of Kendrapara (Cuttack, Orissa) was completely demolished by the orders of the Governor of Aurangzeb and a mosque on

It was constructed.[27] But being Hindus the Marathas were much interested in encouraging the Hindu Gods. The Government introduced the practice of paying annual Grants of 20,000 kahans or kauris (about Rs. 6,000/-) for charitable purposes. This kind of Charity was known as Annachhatra. This money was paid chiefly to the Brahmins who were in charge of 2 Thakuras (God) or idols and were also incharge of religious ceremonies connected with their worship, A certain amount of money was spent for persons most of whom were old, especially widows while the rest was spent for giving cooked foods and clothes to the poor travellers.[28]

From this it is evident that Brahmins were incharge of Gods and were also incharge of religious ceremonies connected with Gods during Maratha period in mediaeval Orissa. It is, therefore, very clear that Gods of idols were worshipped in B*hagavata* Gharas in villages with the B*hagavata* Gadi (the place where the text of the Oriya Bhagavata with God Jagannath worshipped). Even Maratha Government paid grants for the maintenance of such religious-cum-social institutions. It was during the period that B*hagavata* Ghara catered to the needs of the widows, orphans, sick and inflicted and served as a resting place for the poor travellers.

The source states that monthly grant was paid for the maintenance of mosques and that one Kadam Rasul alone was given a grant of Rs. 73/- per month for the purpose[29]. This gives clear evidence on the secularism of the Maratha Government in Orissa and that the Government was equally generous both towards the Hindus as well as to the Muslims. They gave equal attention to the religious preachings of both the Hindus

and Muslims alike. Ewer, the acting judge of Cuttack on the Bengal judicial consultations dted. 27.2.1818, has mentioned the existence of Panchayats consisting of five or more members each in the villages of Orissa. The Panchayats were responsible for disposing of cases for the village people during Maratha period. Even, these Panchayats were given grants by the Maratha Government. It is, therefore, very clear from this evidence that *Bhagavata* Gharas was the seat of the village Panchayat during Maratha rule in Orissa that had taken up manifold activities for the village people in mediaeval Orissa. As the Maratha Government took keen interest in protecting the Hindu religious rites, the worship of Hindu Gods in general and paid charities for idol worship in particular, they however, left the religious activities tobe done by the people themselves. The Government also gave land to Brahmins and Gosains (religious preachers) for worship of Gods. Even local land lords designated as Zamindars gave lands to Brahmins and Gosains for worship of Gods. They also gave lands to religious institutions as endowments for the purpose of the religious welfare of the people[80]. The Maratha Government was not in favour of effecting any change in the age old custom of worshipping the Hindu Gods and so also the worship of Jagannatha[81].

The journal of Kalinga Research society Vol-I of sept. 1946, gives a clear account as to how the Maratha Government had protected the religious institutions under their careful measures. And as such, a new class of people rose into prominence with the grace and favour of Maratha Subadar. This kind of nobility strengthened the hold of Maratha Government on the activities of the people of Orissa[82].

11. *Bhagavata Ghara aftea The Mediaeval Period* :

After the defeat of the Marathas in Orissa and the legal recognition of it in the treaty of Deogaon on 17th December, 1803,[33], the English system of administration made its permanent foothold in Orissan soil, The Bhagavata Ghara which had rendered manifold services to the cause and betterment of village population in Orissa had lost its youthful splendours and its decline had set in. With the decaying of the activities of the *Bhagavata* Gharas, the villages were converted into the of all evils and the place of corruption for the village people in Orissa. The people were attracted towards the English system of education and as such there had begun a change in the outlook of the people, resulting in the decay of the glorious mediaeval village administration of the *Bhagavata Gharas* in Orissa.

12. *Revival of Youth Clubs and Gram Sabhas* :

After the turn of century, many mediaeval *Bhagavata Gharas* of Orissa have been converted to youth clubs, the meeting place for women organisations and venue for the meeting of the villagers (Grama Sabha). Many such organisations including the socalled 'Grama Sabha' also inflicted severe damages on the poor villagers. These Grama Sabha were the monopoly of a few selfish corrupt people and even now such useless organisations exist in Orissa which are inflicting severe punishment on the village community.

13. *Changing Pattern of The Hindu Society in Orissa* :

With this shifting over of the village cultural and social organisation of Orissa, the Hindu Society received a great set back. The attitude of the people has changed,

the old family system underwent a great damage, the fellow feeling, brotherhood and social integration also lost in oblivion. In addition :

(1) Many people retain their old aristocratic way of living but many of the Hindus who come under the influence of external contacts after the mediaeval *Bhagavata Ghara* era are changing very rapidly their mediaeval traits and losing their old customs and social organizations. The people have been debased and made miserable economically, socially and spiritually through these contacts.

(2) Some class of Hindus have been characterised by different traits : (i) People adhering to cultivation. The characteristic of this class are :

(a) Its members live a joint family system and enjoying large communal life.

(b) Economically, they share one another.

(c) Their life still centred round agricultural products of their own; and

(d) They live with their family tradition and culture and are honest, simple, innocent (Even now exists in many villagers of Orissa).

(3) The other categories who come under the influence of modern society have begun to change in many ways. Their chief characteristics are :

(i) Their village life has become individualistic.

(ii) They do not share things with each other.

(iii) They are becoming more accustomed to outside life, and false vanity. They are less simple and honest.

(4) The next category of the people consists of all those who have come under the influence of external contact and are changing very rapidly their traits of character and losing their old customs and social organisations. They adhere to alcoholism, drugetry such as wine, opium, bhanga, heroine, brown sugar etc. They have been debased and made economically, socially and spiritually very miserable through these contacts. These traits of character are rapidly influencing the modren man. Among these classes of people some are wealthy business class and big officers but they are spiritually and socially maladjusted.

(5) The other category consists of old aristocracy, are highly cultured Hindus, and are wealthy people. They retain their old ancestral customs and preserve their dignity and religion adherence. No change is noticed even after external contacts. They adhere to Hindu social order and guided by the principles of *Bhagavata*, *Bhagavata Gita*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

14. *Urgent need for the Revival of Bhagavata Gharas in Orissa* :

Although, the mediaeval *Bhagavata Gharas* decayed due to the emergence of the youth clubs, women organisations, Grama Sabhas etc., yet in some villages of the coastal districts of Orissa, especially Cuttack, Puri and Ddenkanal we find the revival of *Bhagavata Gharas* in recent times. The source referred to in this connection are my personal survey and two other reports which appeared in the Oriya dailies 'The Samaja' and 'The Dharitri'. The first report referred to in this connec-

tion is published in the famous Oriya daily 'The Samaj' which states[34] that "the *Bhagavata Ghara* which had been established by Sidha Mahapurusa (Saint) Shri Rajib Lochan Das at the Udayabata Dharma (the name of the Cuttack district declined in course of time. By the efforts of enthusiastic youths, the *Bhagavata Ghara* was again revived on Falguna Shukla Dashami (in the month of February, 1979). *The Bhagavata Mela* (festival) was also observed at this place by the effort of Shri Duryodhana Das, the Mahanta (Saint Trustee) of the monastery of the Paradip Port". The second source referred to in this connection is the Oriya daily 'Dharitri' which states[35] that "the *Bhagavata Parayana* (the recitation of the Oriya B*hagavata*) which was observed at the Kanchaneswari Thakurani Pujapitha (the seat of the Goddess Kanchaneswari) of the village Biribati of the Cuttack district 100 years back, is revived by the efforts of the youth organisation of this village". Even in many villages, efforts are being made to revive the dilapidated *Bhagavata Gharas* of the mediaeval Orissa. The author hopes that *Bhagavata Gharas* which have been revived in recent times shall try to operate as the principal forum for discussion on all important matters of the village; undertake developmental activities in the villages of Orissa by formulating suitable plans and programmes and carry out socio-cultural and other types of activities as were done previously under the seat of B*hagavata Gharas* of Mediaeval Orissa. I request the Government of Orissa to extend financial support to such organisations by registering them under the society acts. Since many of the dilapidated *Bhagavata Gharas* have their very good collections of rare palm leaf manuscripts and other religious texts, Government of Orissa should take immediate steps for their preservation and puplication. Further the Government should encourage

the people in villages to establish more and more *Bhagavata Gharas* with a library attached to it in order to preach religion and morality to the people and to preserve our antiquated cultural heritage and tradition.

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